

THE BEGINNING

MOSCOW — 1937

Every night a few more persons vanished from the hotel. Large red stamps would appear on the doors of a few more rooms.

The others waited anxiously. Each party member returned from meetings where he had attacked *traitors*, spies, and *saboteurs*, and passed long decisions asking for the destruction of the enemies of the people. He then began to worry about the arrest of Comrade Z. Each wondered: Can it possibly involve me?

But how could anyone imagine that Z, such an old *Bolshevik*. . . . Of course Z had once been accused of errors back in 1923. But that was a long time ago, and being accused wasn't a crime. There must be some other reason for his arrest. The *NKVD* knew what it was doing. But what had Z done? Could people conceal their true selves so thoroughly? After all, Z was an old friend. That was the danger; that could get you into trouble.

The guests avoided one another. They began weighing every word carefully before they spoke. They observed one another suspiciously. Why did the Party secretary give me that queer look today?



11 YEARS IN SOVIET PRISON CAMPS



A Ladder Edition at the
3,000 Word Level adapted
by Robert E. Lado



THE CELL

A group cell for women. The windows were not only barred but also covered with boards, so that you could never see anything but a small strip of the sky. A naked electric light burned day and night. The gray stone walls were alive with thousands of bed insects. One corner was covered by inches of water. Some seventy women sat on a platform laid about half a yard above the stone floor and covering the entire cell. There were no blankets, mattresses, or straw sacks, although a few lucky women owned prized blankets. A terrible odor took your breath away.

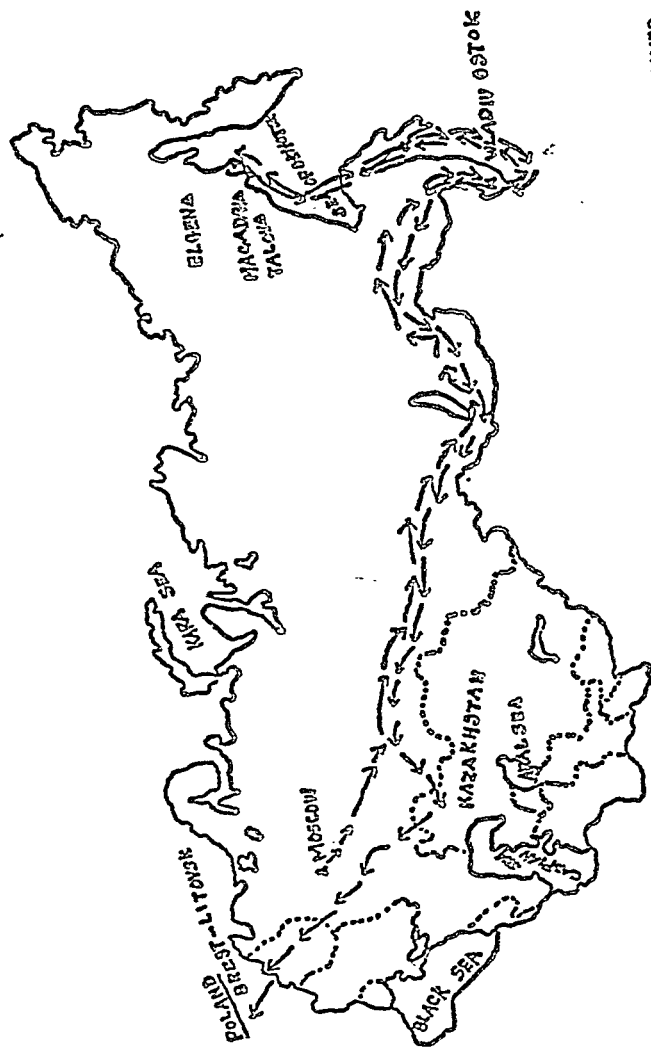
This cell had been intended originally for twenty-four prisoners. It now held seventy.

One of the prisoners, called the cell attendant as I later learned, measured out a space for me about sixteen inches wide. Then she gave me a wooden spoon and a tin cup.

Butyrka Prison in Moscow holds an average of thirty thousand prisoners, but it is only one of the five large Moscow prisons for suspects, prisoners not yet found guilty of any crime. The others are Lubyanka, Lifortovo Military Prison, Navinka Prison and Targanka Prison.

In all the cells in Butyrka the custom is to give space to each prisoner according to the length of time he has been in prison. The best places near the window are given to those in prison longest. The new

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A PRISON CAMPS
 A 100 100 100 100 100
 MILITARY

RUSSIA

Are there any charges against me? But I'm completely innocent.

They were all innocent, and all afraid. They tossed awake in their beds at night.

ARREST

Was it a dream, or had someone knocked? There it was again—a loud, insistent knocking. A man's voice called out, "Open the door!"

Three officers entered, members of the NKVD, the state political police.

"Your name?"

"Elinor Lipper."

One of the others looked through a pile of papers, took one out and handed it to me. All I knew of Russian was the alphabet. But I could understand "O-r-d-e-r . . . A-r-r-est. . . ." And my name.

They walked me down the stairs six floors to the street. Familiar and unfamiliar faces stared at me, paled and turned away.

I took my last automobile ride through Moscow. One NKVD officer sat beside me, another beside the driver. I was taken to Lubyanka, the central NKVD prison. Iron double doors opened.

I was inside of the first of my ten Soviet prisons. The first day of eleven years in prison had begun.

RECEIVED IN PRISON

A disinterested woman guard searched me. My papers, watch, ring, money, and pocketbook were taken away. Then the iron door of a small cell shut behind me.

That same night I was taken to another prison in the dark hole of a prison van. My stomach felt tight with fear. Now they were going to kill me. Nonsense, why should they? But if I had been arrested for nothing, I could be shot for nothing.

More iron doors, courtyards, walls and iron doors, the huge chambers of Butyrka Prison.

Each prisoner brought to Butyrka Prison must strip naked. A woman guard runs her fingers through the prisoner's hair, examines her ears and nose, examines her mouth, looks under her arms and into her *anus*, then makes the naked prison bend and touch the floor several times, and finishes with a female examination. All buttons, hooks, eyes and rubber articles are removed from her clothes and all pockets and folds are searched. Then the prisoner is allowed to get dressed again.

I walked down endless halls. Wire nets were stretched between flights of stairs to prevent the prisoners from trying to kill themselves. An iron door was opened and closed behind me.

prisoners are put near the black water can. When a prisoner is taken out, the rest move up exactly according to the order of their arrest. No exceptions are made for sickness or age. In general it is surprising to a foreigner to see how little consideration a modern Soviet citizen shows for the aged or the sick. Nothing in Soviet education inspires young people to respect age.

From the moment he is arrested the prisoner is kept in constant doubt. He is given no explanation. This permanent doubt in the grip of a silent, frightening power, produces in every prisoner exactly what it is expected to produce: fear. He begins to fear every change in his condition. And the NKVD plays with masterful skill upon this fear. Even when the prisoner is not called for questioning, he is never allowed any peace. The big group cells are constantly being reorganized. At least once a month the entire cell is called out for a physical search. Again you are made to strip naked; the last button is cut off your dress; ribbons that you made from threads with great effort are taken away, as well as the sewing needles which all the women make out of the teeth of combs. Then again you will be called out for finger-printing, and again to be photographed.

The prisoners are always suspicious of one another, for there is at least one person in each cell who informs the authorities of everything her fellow prisoners say. These informers are also supposed to urge the other prisoners to confess.

Prisoners who are subjected to specially severe questioning (in other words, torture) are generally

kept in Lubyanka or Lifortovo prisons, or in the special section of Butyrka, where they occupy single or double cells. But occasionally, as an object lesson to the others, a few of these black-and-blue and swollen victims of long questioning are put into the group cells. But the months of waiting for the first questioning is in itself enough to wear down the prisoners. Most prisoners enter the cell with the quiet belief that they are innocent. Soon enough they become anxious, sleepless wrecks.

For seven and a half months I sat in various group cells without being called for questioning a single time. At first I expected every hour that my arrest would prove to be a mistake.

I sent a request to Vyshinsky, saying that it was against the constitution to hold a prisoner for more than six months without telling him the charge against him. It was not answered.

HOW I CAME TO THE SOVIET UNION

I heard about Russia for the first time when I was nine years old. A lady told me about a country where there were no longer any rich people or poor people, where all received just as much money as they needed for food and clothing.

When I was eleven my father told me about the children of Belgian workers who had given all their savings to help hungry Russian children.

When I was fourteen my schoolmates and I laughed aloud at a teacher of ours who took part in

the workers' public display of protest on May 1. But I felt real sympathy for the sorrows of the Dutch fisherwomen whom I saw waiting at the port on stormy days in November. They often waited in vain for their men to return.

At sixteen my political views were limited to two simple principles: war and the death sentence should not exist.

When I graduated from high school my principal asked me what I expected to study. When I told him I still hesitated between medicine and the liberal arts, he said with a smile, "Why not—editor of a peace magazine?" My classmates roared with laughter.

In 1931, I began studying medicine in Berlin. The Chinese wall behind which I had lived so secure in my native Holland began to fall down. For the first time I met students who spoke eagerly about a country where talented young people could go to school without paying for their classes, the Soviet Union. (In 1942 charges for higher education were again introduced there.) We had endless discussions about free love and the right of a woman to have an *abortion*. There was one country which gave this right to women—Soviet Russia. (In 1935 abortion was forbidden by law in the Soviet Union and was declared a crime punishable by eight years in a labor camp.)

I worked during vacations in the city hospital, and for the first time saw human misery close up. I helped distribute milk among the children of those out of work. To this day I can see six children of a sick man out of work staring at us with dumb distrust.

Once your eyes were opened to social wrong it was impossible to shut them again, especially during the years 1931 and 1932 in Berlin.

What first led me to socialism was a purely emotional shock from this misery. It was only later that I strengthened my belief by reading about the theory of socialism. The danger of the Nazi beast was coming very near, while the Social Democratic government of Germany retreated step by step. I entered the "Red Student Group."

I thought I was choosing a social order which would use modern engineering for the benefit of the people, rather than for a privileged high class, by having the government own the land and the means of production.

A social order which would not resort to war to further its purposes, because its people felt linked with the people all over the world. Which would use it only in the period of change and only against those who used force against it.

A social order which freed its artists, engineers, and men of science from concern for their daily bread.

A social order where there was no desire or cause for crime because all men were assured a way to earn a wage that would enable them to live with the dignity of human beings.

For the sake of this dream I went to the Soviet Union in 1937. There I worked for two months in a publishing house, and after my first two months I was arrested. Nothing I had done, said or planned could have justified my arrest.

Today I know that the Soviet Union has betrayed socialism to the world; it has drowned the idea in blood.

But at that time I did not yet know this. At that time I sat in my cell completely confused, and waited. I learned Russian and heard my fellow prisoners' stories. Each new story that I heard made me see more and more, until at last I realized what I vainly tried not to realize: that all these people were as innocent as I was. Then my own suffering began to become one with the vast suffering of them all.

THE PRISONERS OF MY CELL

In 1937 and 1938 about half of the prisoners were Communist Party members or Young Communists. Three fourths of these were members of the Russian Communist Party; the others belonged to the Polish, Latvian or German parties. There were also some Hungarians and Rumanians. The rest of the prisoners were housewives from every section of the population. Some of them had been arrested on accusations made by informers; others because they were the wives of more or less prominent men.

Mrs. Rakovski, the wife of Soviet Ambassador Rakovski, was a Rumanian, a white-haired, sickly woman who suffered severe heart attacks every few weeks. Her neighbor in the cell was a dark-eyed, dark-haired, woman of quiet dignity, the wife of Prince Obolenski, who for years held a high position in the Soviet state and was a frequent visitor of

Stalin. Then there was a delicate, slender, nervous person, a former student of philosophy, who was the wife of Alexander Serebrovsky, head of a huge copper company. There was a large breasted woman with dyed blonde hair who stepped around the cell on high heels. She was the wife of Commander Silko. Lacking face powder, she powdered her nose with tooth powder when she was called for questioning. This did not help her; like the others she was condemned to eight years in camp for belonging to the family of a traitor. Rebuchkova, the wife of a high state official, was a woman over fifty who had obviously been very beautiful in her youth. She suffered from a severe stomach disease and when ill would twist and roll violently on the floor, with screams that moved you to pity. Lisa Geller, who had worked for the Soviet Trade Mission in Berlin, cried bitterly about her two small children whom she had left at home. The first wife of a member of the government, Meshlauk, was a woman of about forty with a tight-lipped, stern face. She was an extreme communist and a person with great confidence in herself. Suspected of spying, she was condemned to eight years in camp; she died of *dysentery* in 1938 while in the transfer camp at Vladivostok. Mrs. Kossior, who had accompanied her husband on a foreign job to Berlin, attempted to kill herself the night after she was found guilty and condemned to ten years for *counter-revolutionary* activity. She served her term in a Siberian camp near Mariinsk. Voronova, who was assistant to the People's Commissar for Light Industry, had formerly worked in a clothing factory. By

means of devotion to her work and obeying absolutely she had risen to her high position. She was condemned to ten years in prison for counter-revolutionary activity. In memory of her husband she had never married again. He had died during the Civil War when the Whites surrounded and set fire to a stable in which he and his soldiers had protected themselves.

The secretary of Madame Stassova, chief of the International Red Aid (MOPR), was named Shvalova. When she was placed in our cell she did not speak to anyone and refused to answer our questions about events in Spain. She thought that we were all dangerous counter-revolutionaries and that she alone was innocent. A military court condemned her to fifteen years in prison. She died at the beginning of the war. Irina Kun, wife of the famous Hungarian communist Bela Kun, was given eight years because she was suspected of spying.

These names represent only a portion of all the revolutionaries or their wives whom I met in prison and camp. All of them, after more or less cruel questionings, were given long terms in prison, whether or not they denied their husbands, whether or not they had lived with them during the years before their arrest, whether or not they had children or were with child. They were found guilty and condemned even when their husbands had killed themselves a year before their arrest—as was the case with the professional dancer, Madame Lercher, of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. This charming cultured dancer was not political at all. For a short time she had been

married to a people's commissar of light industry who killed himself after the first big Moscow trial in 1936. After his death he was accused of being a Trotsky follower. A year later Madame Lercher was arrested on the same charge. She was condemned to eight years in camp because of her marriage to a man who had held a high post up to the moment of his death and who had been branded as a traitor only after he killed himself. It was deeply sad to watch this woman continue her dance practice and physical exercise. Losing her ability to move and bend easily meant for her losing her means of support, and so although all exercise was forbidden she continued her dance practice in the far corner of the cell. With the sad and resigned eyes of a prisoner, she moved her feet with magic lightness and performed lovely movements and steps on the rough boards of the cell.

One prisoner who was a great comfort to us was Berta Alexandrovna B. A kinder person than this near-sighted, very fat woman could not be imagined. Again and again she had problems with the cell attendant because she could not lower her loud, full voice; she was always shouting to give courage to someone.

Berta had never lost a deep interest in other people, other countries, and in art, literature, and above all poetry. Her particular type of cultured revolutionary has by now practically died out in Russia. The last representatives of the class vanished behind prison walls during 1937 and 1938. Foreigners who always think of Russians as a combination of Dostoyevsky and Gorky would be bitterly disappointed

today. The search for truth, the urge to understand the meaning of life, is wholly foreign to the younger generation which has passed through the school of the Communist Youth Organization. For them, all problems have been solved; there is a standard answer to every question. Their language is thick with ready-made phrases. They quote Stalin instead of thinking for themselves; they get their opinions from "Pravda" articles. They are proud and satisfied, and everything connected with them is the greatest thing there is: their country, their power, their leader. There is also the greatest misery and suffering, but they are not aware of this, for they have never known anything but Soviet life. They have neither sympathy nor understanding for their elders; there is no bond between them.

There were a number of arrested Young Communists in our cell, and their attitude toward Berta Alexandrovna was a combination of distrust and scorn. She spoke several foreign languages well and could become as eager about Michelangelo's poems as they about the questionable successes of the Five-Year Plan. Everything about Berta's emotional and mental world was foreign to the Young Communists, and therefore Berta—who had spent years of her life in Tsarist prisons for the sake of her ideas—was an enemy to them.

People like Berta Alexandrovna were more completely separated from the others. Later I saw her again at Kolyma, when we had both been ten years in prison. Her graying hair had turned snow-white; she had lost a great deal of weight, and folds of

empty skin hung loose all over her body. Dead tired, she dragged her still heavy legs back to camp from work every evening. She was not likely to think of physical exercises now; every movement was a weary effort to her. She no longer talked about poetry; her eyes no longer flashed with emotion—they too had been dulled by suffering. Her husband had died in camp; her older son was also dead; she did not know what had become of the younger son. Soon she would be free. Free to crawl into a corner somewhere and die.

IN THE MACHINERY OF JUSTICE

EVENING IN THE CELL

As soon as it was dark, the usually silent prison was filled with sounds. We all listened to the steadily growing shrieks and screams, listened to the questioners shouting curses at their victims. The voices of the prisoners could be distinguished only when they cried out in fear, pain, or despair.

A coarse voice: "You rat, I'll make you talk."

Then more silence—we could not hear the blows—and suddenly a clear, pleading cry: "Comrades, comrades." The cry grew louder, more hopeless: "Comrades, comrades."

We in our cell listened, choked with fear and pity. The newcomers sat pale and wide-eyed, thinking

of their own first questioning and what would happen to them.

"Mama, mama. . . ." the man now screamed. Others listened knowingly, thinking that this was already behind them and wondering whether Heaven would preserve them from further hearings.

"Mama, mama," he screamed.

There were a few who still believed that nothing of the sort could happen to them, because after all they were innocent.

I thought about the fact that the man had gone on calling his torturers "comrade" when they were already beating him; he could think of no other word for them and called them "comrade" when they fell upon him like beasts—until he understood and in his agony cried out to the only one who had not betrayed him: "Mama."

THE MOTHER

One of the many mothers in our cell was Smirnova, wife of a high government official. After her husband's arrest she had been put out of her apartment in Moscow. She found a miserable shelter outside the city where she rented a bare peasant's hut. After much searching she succeeded in getting work in the post office. In rest periods she had to rush home to nurse her two-month-old baby. The next child was a girl of six who watched the baby while the mother was at work. The oldest, a fourteen-year-old boy, was going to school.

The little girl frequently asked about her father, and the mother invented many stories. The boy asked no questions. He had been present when the father was arrested and he could not forget his father's look when he was handed the order for his arrest. The boy had stood at the window and watched the automobile speed away. That moment had marked the end of his childhood. His father was an enemy of the people. His father had gone to prison for no crime. That fact was more important than all the offenses he had to endure from then on. None of his former friends spoke to him, for he was the son of an enemy of the people. No one wanted to sit next to him in class. Almost every day, in classes or at school assemblies, curses were called down upon the enemies of the Soviet state and the pupils were urged to be on guard against them. Then the eyes of dozens of children without mercy cut him from all sides. At fourteen this boy was cast out of society and hated. The only person who still loved him was his mother.

During the early period after the father's arrest the family expected his return daily, hourly. But months went by and he did not come back—none of all the millions of innocent persons come back once the prison gates of the Soviet Union shut behind them.

But the police did come back. One night they were here to take the mother away. Quivering, pale, the boy stood in front of her to protect her. It did not help. Nor did it help when the little girl, awakened out of her sleep, hung sobbing on her mother. It did not help when the mother, almost mad with despair,

snatched up her baby. The police pushed the boy and girl aside, laid the screaming baby back in its bed, and dragged the resisting mother into the waiting car.

Iron gates swung open and closed. Toward evening she was taken to be questioned. With a cruel smile the examining judge looked at the woman's distressed face, framed in loose hair, at her loose stockings and her hands, which were nervously holding her buttonless dress to keep it together.

"Tell us about the counter-revolutionary activity of your husband."

"My husband was not a counter-revolutionary. I've lived with him for fifteen years and I know everything he thinks. He can't be a traitor."

"Then you won't talk? You want to shield this bad fellow? All right. Maybe the cell will change your mind."

"The cell? I must go home. I've left my three children all alone. My baby will starve if I'm not allowed to nurse it."

"Sign this statement that you were informed of your husband's activities against the government and you will see your baby."

"I can't sign it. He's innocent."

The examining judge pressed a button. His attendant appeared. "Take her away. Cell forty-nine."

She stood in the cell like one walking in her sleep. She was not able to understand the questions of the other prisoners.

When she was given her spoon and cup, like all new prisoners, she took them quickly and sat down

on the boards close to the bars of the open window, with her back to the others, in search of a private corner. Then she pressed the milk out of her bursting breasts into the tin cup. One of the women emptied the cup into the foul smelling can near the door. A low murmur passed through the cell: "They've put a nursing mother into prison."

The mother did not hear them. She could hear only the crying of her hungry baby.

Next day the examining judge interviewed her again.

She pleaded, cried, groaned. She did not know that an examining judge of the NKVD cannot be moved to pity. Instead of answering her, he laid the statement down for her to sign.

"My baby will never thank me if I ruin her father for her sake." She pushed the paper away.

The examining judge raised his shoulders and had her taken out. That night she was called out once more. A nurse wrapped her breasts to stop the flow of milk.

After a few months, without any charge being made against her as a person, she was condemned to eight years loss of freedom "as a member of the family of a traitor." She never found out what had happened to her children.

THE METHOD

A Soviet citizen charged with counter-revolutionary activity is arrested on the basis of a paper signed

by the state attorney. A similar paper permits the search of a home. In the large cities, persons arrested are brought to special prisons and are kept apart from criminals before trial. In smaller towns where there is limited space, prisoners are put into mixed cells with criminals before trial. Even the smallest town in the Soviet Union has a prison, and everywhere the prison is being made larger.

For counter-revolutionaries the period in prison while awaiting trial is often longer than a year and sometimes stretches on to two or three years. But on the average, especially for female prisoners, it lasts six months. A law exists which provides that a prisoner must be informed of the charge against him within two weeks after his arrest, but in practice this law is seldom observed. I did not learn of the charge against me until my fourteenth month in prison.

All those arrested are classed under Section 58 of the criminal law: Counter-revolution. This section is divided into various articles, and the charges rest on one or more of these articles. The following list is not complete because my knowledge of the articles comes from meeting prisoners who were accused under them. I never met any prisoners charged under Articles 2, 3, 5, 9 or 13.

Article 1: Traitors

a. civil

b. military

Article 4: Support of a foreign state against the Soviet Union.

Article 6: Spying

Article 7: Activity against the government

Article 8: Violence

Article 9: Waste of effort

Article 10: Stirring the people and spreading information which is not approved.

Article 11: Organizing and forming of groups

Article 12: Failure to accuse

Article 14: Damaging Russian property

It is the business of the examining judges to draw up a statement showing the person's guilt, and to persuade him or her to sign this statement. If he steadily refuses to sign, accusing statements against him are forced from his fellow prisoners so that his courage does him no good. But if his signing is essential, methods of questioning are applied which in the end always succeed—because there are limits to what the human body can stand.

It is very rare for the prisoner to be faced with witnesses or other prisoners, and then only when they say something against him.

Accused counter-revolutionaries do not have lawyers to defend them.

A prisoner awaiting trial is not permitted to contact his family or any other person. Twice a month, however, he has the right to address requests to one of the following authorities:

The head of the prison

The examining judge

The State Attorney

The People's Commissar (now Minister) of the Interior

The Central Committee of the Communist Party

The Supreme Soviet

Almost all prisoners write several letters to one or another of these authorities. They offer proofs of their innocence, name witnesses who can give evidence in their favor, point to their faultless life or Party history, and protest against the methods of the examiners. I know of not a single case in which the above authorities (assuming the communications were really sent to them) did anything to help a prisoner or even answered his letter.

The prisoner is informed when the examination is completed.

There are two different ways in which counter-revolutionaries are found guilty. Either a military court (or military commission) tries the case, or the decision is passed officially by a secret court of judges. The military court passes death sentences or prison sentences from ten to twenty-five years. The decision of a military court always involves seizing of personal property and loss of civil rights for from three to five years after completing the sentence. These decisions are based upon one or more articles of Section 58. The "special commission of judges of the NKVD" (OSO for short in Russian) gives terms up to ten years in camp, in the absence of the prisoner.

Except for the show-trials which reach the world newspapers, all trials of counter-revolutionaries are held in secret. After the trial the condemned person is placed in a cell reserved for the condemned.

Those who are condemned to prison terms are moved to the prisons for political prisoners alone. After about three years the terms of most sentences are cut, although the prisoner himself usually has not

asked for any change. The new sentence provides for the prisoner's being sent to a camp.

* * *

For thirty years the borders of this vast country have been sealed tight. For thirty years the few citizens who are sent abroad have been screened over and over, weighed, measured, tested, and examined to determine whether they are firm enough to meet the danger of contact with foreign countries. For thirty years there have been no general pardons at all for political prisoners.

At bottom it is not spying that the rulers fear. It is the possible comparison between life in Russia and life abroad. They have to fear this. For thirty years the Soviet people have been given a totally twisted, unreal, carefully screened and changed picture of the outside world.

It is true that foreign films are shown in the Soviet Union, but the best are never shown, only the second-rate films. In spite of their shallow nature and their raw simple plots these foreign films are always an event for the Soviet citizens. This pleasure in poor films expresses how tremendously tired the Soviet citizen is. He is sick to death of hero talk, of being urged to accomplishments beyond human capacity, of the religion of hate in the name of a questionable love for the not yet born generations of future centuries. In the foreign films he finds a little of the element he is starving for: human, unheroic, untroubled, restful entertainment. What joy it is for

him when for an entire evening no one is made a hero to be worshipped.

In order to satisfy this obvious hunger of the people for moving pictures that are not political, a number of very pretty fairy-tale films have been made in the Soviet Union. But it is interesting that the ideas for the pictures had to be taken from fairy-tales, because there is nothing high-spirited and innocently charming in the real Soviet world.

Some foreign literature can be obtained in the Soviet Union. But how small, how very small is the number of foreign authors who are made available in Russian. Few Soviet citizens are in a position to read foreign works in the original because they can never order a book from abroad or find it in a bookstore. Soviet citizens are able to read only what the state examiners consider healthful. There must be no grounds whatever for comparison with other countries, for only then can the Soviet rulers convince the Soviet people that closest control of every word of printed matter in the Soviet Union is true freedom of the press; that it is a sign of true freedom of opinion when a man is shot for printing something not legal; that shooting striking workers is proof of a true democratic spirit; that voting for the one candidate on the ticket is true election freedom; that it is great progress when no worker can change jobs without a permit from the authorities and when arriving late twenty minutes can mean six months in prison; that the constant holding of almost ten per cent of the male population in prisons and forced labor camps is the normal condition of society and

marks the country as "the only true democratic nation in the world."

THE "FACTORY BELT"

We remained in our cell and could not believe that innocent people were being found guilty. Prisoners are kept completely apart before trial. We never saw anyone but the prisoners in our particular cell. As the twentieth year after the Revolution approached (November 7, 1937) we abandoned ourselves to hopeful dreams that every one would be pardoned in honor of the day. In reality the prison system was everywhere tightened. The cells of people not yet brought to trial became so crowded that many women fainted and suffered heart attacks due to the lack of air. Moral and physical torture began to be applied more frequently. The most common type of torture was one the prisoners called "the factory belt," after the moving belts that are used in production lines. The prisoner is not allowed to sleep. Every four hours the examining judges relieve one another. Their sole duty is to keep the prisoner from sleeping. This continues for days. Again and again the dazed victim is asked to sign the paper the examiner has prepared, confessing to his supposed crime. He refuses. His feet and legs swell; he can no longer stand straight.

"Stay awake, stay awake. Stand up against the wall."

The prisoner wheels, folds, falls unconscious to the

floor. The examining judge presses a button. A doctor comes in and gives the defendant a needle. He awakens.

"Sign it."

He shakes his head and his eyes shut. He is shaken awake, and again he stands against the wall until he falls once more. Then he is taken to his cell.

He scarcely touches the cold supper that his fellow prisoners have saved for him. They lay him on the floor and by the time they have folded a coat and placed it under his aching, swollen legs, he is asleep. After ten minutes the slot in the door opens and the prisoner is called to another questioning. His comrades shake him awake, hold him up, cheer him, but he neither sees nor understands. With eyes red, swollen and wildly tired, he stumbles into the hall where a guard with a blank expression on his face is waiting for him. He stumbles up steps and down halls, stumbles into the small examining room where never ending torture and a fresh, well-rested questioner are waiting for him.

"Sign the paper—then you can sleep. Why are you torturing yourself? You'll sign sooner or later. They all sign. Stay awake. Stand up. What kind of position is that? Don't lean against the wall."

He continues to resist. Three days, four days, eight days. Sleep, sleep. If only he could sleep a full hour. Why is he torturing himself so? The other prisoners have already signed—the examiners show him the confessions. Those others quit already. Sign and you can sleep. No, never. Ten days, eleven days . . . Sleep, sleep. He can think of nothing else. Let them shoot

him. If only he can sleep again. On the sixteenth day he signs.

Then comes the trial. It takes place in Lifortovo Military Prison. Since this is a life or death case, the prisoner is present at his trial. Judges and the state attorney sit at a long table covered with a red cloth. The statement prepared by the examining judge and signed by the accused is read. The states attorney makes a brief closing address. The prisoner is given a brief final word. He declares his innocence, declares that he was forced to sign under pressure. The court goes out and returns in a few minutes with the decision, which has been decided before the trial. Confused, the prisoner hears as though from far away: "Guilty. Condemned to death by shooting.

* * *

Lifortovo Military Prison is well known for its methods of torture. In 1937 men sat in the death cells of Lifortovo and waited.

First came the torture, then the sentence, then the waiting. Alone, or by twos, threes, and fours.

In the death cells they sat and waited.

In the death cells they sat and groaned.

In the death cells they sat and screamed.

When they screamed the guard would knock on the iron door with his keys. And they would be quiet, would sit waiting in silence.

When a step was heard in the hall, they looked away from one another. Not because of their own fear. That was past increasing. They looked away because they respected the fear of the others, which was there in the others' eyes, so naked and so terrible.

They turned away their eyes in order not to shame their mates in the cell.

Step in the hall. They're coming. Whom are they coming for? There are still three left in this cell. Not me, not me!

Steps pass by and die out along the hall.

In the death cell they sit and wait.

TROTSKY FOLLOWERS

Semyonova was a simple woman who had never thought much about political matters. When she heard that *Marshal* of the Soviet Union Tukhachevsky had been shot as a German spy, she made a remark among a group of women neighbors: "Oh he was a handsome man. I once saw a picture of him."

She was arrested for that. There is always one evil person in a group of women. She was charged under Section 58, Article 10: stirring the people and spreading information which is not approved. The trial was swift; she had said what she had said and there were witnesses against her. The sentence: ten years in prison for praising an enemy of the people. And at home two motherless children remained alone with a father who drank—and did not wait for her. Ten years are a long time.

A tired old peasant woman looks around the cell for condemned prisoners with eyes filled with horror. It is a tower cell with narrow high windows sunk in the thick walls and hardly admitting light or air. The little old woman does not know that she is in a

historic place. In this cell the great rebel Pugachov was held prisoner until Catherine the Great (who built Butyrka Prison) had him killed. The little old woman would scarcely be comforted to learn that poor Pugachov had the cell all to himself, while she is sharing it with sixty-five other condemned prisoners.

Quietly she raises the edge of her many wide underclothes, sits down in a corner, puts her hands over her face and nods her gray head with its dark shawl back and forth, crying softly in silence.

"Well, grandmother, what did you get?"

"Five years," she sobs.

"What for, grandmother?"

"What for? I don't know. They say I am a Tr . . . a Trok . . . a Tractorist," she finishes it at last.

No, grandmother, not a tractorist. Not until we were called out to be moved and the name and decision of each prisoner was again read aloud did we learn for certain what your crime was. You were condemned for being a Trotskyist! Although you cannot even pronounce the word and do not know the difference between a tractor and a Trotsky.

A COMMUNIST MOTHER

In Vladivostok transfer camp the story of Mother D came to its end. But I will tell it here because it explains in part the motives that make parents and children, brothers and sisters, men and their wives, disown one another once either has been arrested.

This is not always done because they are afraid; sometimes it is caused by a blind faith in the justice and freedom from error of the Party and the NKVD.

"Are you sure it was my mother?" the young prisoner asked another who had just arrived in his cell.

"I couldn't possibly be mistaken," the other said. He was an old man who made a strange contrast with the other prisoners because he was still clean shaven and his suit was carefully pressed. "It was at my last Party meeting. Shortly afterwards I was thrown out of the Party because of contact with an enemy of the people—an old schoolmate of mine with whom I exchanged letters once or twice a year. He was an army officer, and when Tukhachevsky fell he was ruined too."

The younger man's face lit up with a smile of sympathy.

"It happens every day," he answered. "If you stay around here any length of time you'll find out that about 90 per cent of the prisoners were arrested for similar reasons."

"I've known your mother since the Revolution. She was always one of the most active Communists in the clothing factory where I worked as an engineer. A person of extraordinary energy. Recently I'd been noticing how changed she was. She seemed to have aged in a few days. We couldn't understand this change until the day she made her statement at the Party meeting. Then we learned for the first time that her son had been arrested."

"And what did she say?" the son asked, trembling.

"I'm sure she did not speak of her own free will,"

the engineer said as if making excuses. "She was so pale that we all thought she was sick. It must have been a great effort to get up on that platform and announce to hundreds of comrades that she must disown her own son.

"She said her son had been arrested six months earlier. All through that time she had been hoping his innocence would be proved and that he would be restored to good standing and released. But he had not come back. She could therefore no longer doubt that he had been proved to have betrayed the Party. For no innocent person would be kept under arrest in the Soviet Union, and the NKVD did not make mistakes."

"So she publicly disowned me," the son murmured.

"How could we on the outside possibly know that there are so many innocent persons in prison?" the older man gave as an excuse, feeling that he had to say something to reduce the blow.

But he heard the son whisper sternly:

"There were two things I formerly believed in: my mother and the Party. I was never in the unhappy position of having to choose between the two. When I was put behind these bars it seemed to me a simple thing to prove my innocence. But nobody here is interested in proofs of innocence. Guilty, guilty! the examining judges shout, and they think their shouts are proof of the truth of their silly lies. Their blows and kicks were not enough to destroy the image of the Party that I still carried in my heart. I said to myself that the Party and Stalin do not know what is happening here. And in my simple faith I wrote to

People's Commissar Yeshov, to the State Attorney, to Stalin. I never received any answer. And I concluded that these close associates of Stalin, and Stalin himself, not only know what is happening here, but want it to continue. After all, we are right in the middle of Moscow, a short walk from the Kremlin. And these things do not happen only to little people; they also happen to former close associates of Stalin, to his secretary, to people's commissars, to those who only recently were working on the Constitution with him, like Eiche, Kossior, Postyshev, Sulimov. Only the People's Commissar for the Interior, the State Attorney and Stalin Himself could have developed and approved this system which is applied throughout the country. When I recognized this, I lost my faith in the Party.

"But—" his whisper almost faded away—"that my mother, my own mother, would betray me, would deny me for the sake of the Party—such a thought never occurred to me, not even here where you learn to believe in nothing and in no one."

At that moment the small window in the door opened, the military cap of the guard appeared. Slowly the soldier spelled out the name of the engineer, who uttered a loud, tense, "Here," and jumped from the boards down to the floor. The opening in the door fell shut and with the familiar rattle of prison keys the door was opened and the engineer let out. Toward dawn, hours later, when the engineer stumbled on back from the questioning, the younger man who lay awake between his neighbors, watching the insects, on the wall, had no need to ask questions.

The man who returned was no longer a newcomer. That night he had learned the meaning of Soviet justice.

Although the mother had denied her son, she remained a suspect. A few weeks later her house was searched and two forgotten volumes by Bukharin were seized. And Bukharin had meanwhile been classed as counter-revolutionary. Here was cause enough for issuing an order for her arrest. The woman who was condemned in the name of the people was a clothing worker, one of the many women of the people who had believed that the Party would improve the life of the workers and realize the socialist dream to which she had devoted her life. She had believed in this so thoroughly that she had abandoned any claim to a personal life. Her real life was her life in the factory.

It was a real achievement for her when she managed with effort to read through a book on Marxist theory. She was always filled with secret wonder when she saw her son reading book after book. She felt deeply grateful to the form of government which gave him the opportunity to study during the day in libraries and universities. She had always had to read at night, laboring through the pages by the light of a candle after a hard day's work. The mother and son were both proud of one another. But they had no time to give expression to their feelings. Moreover, showing their emotions in this way would not have seemed proper to both.

It was not until after she was in prison that she realized that she had done a terrible wrong to her

son. The shocking fact of her being found guilty as a counter-revolutionary faded before her despair over what she felt to be her failure as a mother. She who should have tried to defend him when all were against him had instead delivered the last blow with her own hands. And as she rode to the Far East in the crowded cattle car, the rattle of the train murmured constantly in her ears: my son, my son, my lost child. . . .

Tens of thousands of prisoners passed through the transfer camp in Vladivostok every month. The women's barracks are situated on a hill, surrounded by a small area of bare ground behind the barbed wire. The barracks for the men are somewhat farther down the hill. Once a day a few men are let out of each barrack to fetch water. Then they go up the bare hill, whose only growth is barbed wire, and pass close by the women's zone.

Day after day the mother looked for her son, and at last he came. He came in torn rags which hung upon a thin, worn body; his hollow face was rough with a beard, his shaved head hung low, his eyes were all and without life. Only a mother would have recognized in this stooped shadow of a man her own son. She fell to her knees at the fence, her hands gripping the wire, her face pressed so close to it that the barbs cut her forehead like a crown of thorns.

"Son! Volodya! My son!" she sobbed. The man turned. His lifeless eyes gazed without interest at the tearstained face of the old woman. Without a word he went on with his burden. "My son, my son!" she cried when he came slowly

back down the hill with the filled cans of water. "Forgive me, forgive your mother!"

For a moment he set down the cans, as though they were too heavy for him, and in a low, calm voice he said, "I have no mother any more. My mother denied me." Then he picked up the cans and vanished among the stooped figures at the bottom of the hill.

FOUND GUILTY AND CONDEMNED

When Anna entered our cell in the spring of 1938, scarcely one of the one hundred and thirty prisoners even glanced at her. (I was in five different group cells in Butyrka Prison. At the time, I was in a cell which had been the prison chapel during the days of the Tsar.) She was a modest, small, thin woman with straight hair like strings, pale blue eyes and a pale, grieving face. She had the usual expression of utter loss and great disturbance of the newly arrived. When the cell attendant questioned her, she was able to answer with only a few words of broken Russian. She was German.

She placed her shoes under the boards, climbed up on the platform, rolled up her worn dark-blue raincoat and put it under her head for a pillow, and stretched out in the place the cell attendant had given to her. At night she took off her skirt and top and used them for a pillow, covering herself with the raincoat. Most of the time she lay staring silently at the dark, arched gray stone ceiling above her. Although the food we were served scarcely stilled the worst of our hunger pains, she

always gave away part of it to her neighbors, who hungrily ate it. She did not bother about going out for the daily fifteen-minute walk in the yard; she did not bother about anything in this narrow world that surrounded her.

Once she was called out for a brief questioning lasting no more than an hour. She came back somewhat more disturbed than she had been before. She lost weight with alarming speed; it was apparent that she was going down fast and was quite willing to die.

More than once I had watched her with extreme discomfort. Discomfort, because I knew that I had to try to help this woman. And that was what I did not want to do. I was so filled with my own sorrows and the sufferings of others that I believed I could contain no more of the sort of sorrow I read in her helpless eyes. Was I not just as helpless? Who tried to do anything for me? Had I not sat in my corner for months, my head pressed against the cold stone wall, letting the waves of this not understood foreign language flow over me—stern, not interested, curious, ill disposed or challenging whispers, but always words I could not understand. Now and then I had been able to make out some meaning in the shallow stream of idle talk, but I had become so fond of being apart from the crowd that I exchanged words with my neighbors very rarely. Besides, my place was by now close to the window where I could see a bit of a tree—a branch with a few leaves. With that branch and the wind and the leaves I daily conducted long conversations.

But then one night I saw her lying awake on the boards pressed in between her stout neighbors who

were enjoying a brief, restless sleep—no one slept deeply, because we were constantly expecting to be called out for questioning, which always occurred at night. I saw her wrapped in her too-short raincoat. Her legs were not covered and she was not able to pull them up against her body because then she would have taken too much space. She lay there so humbly, so sunk in despair, without resistance, anger or protest.

I felt so ashamed that night that I could scarcely wait until morning to go to her and speak with her. And so I heard her story.

Anna came from Hamburg. Until she was forty she had never once left the city. But she was content with this. She had a good husband who worked as a driver and they had always managed to earn enough in good times and bad. They had no children.

There was only one cause for quarrels between them—he was a Communist. Ordinarily this would not have disturbed her, for she knew nothing about politics and would not have wanted to interfere with him. But often he brought his comrades home and they stayed until the early hours of the morning, engaged in what they called discussions. They talked loudly and filled her kitchen with the smell of tobacco—what sort of wife would she have been if she had not objected to that? Several times her husband came back from a public display of protest with torn clothes and injured, so that she was always worrying about him. But all in all theirs was a good life, until 1933. Then Hitler came and her husband had to hide.

The Nazis kept on his track, and finally he fled the country.

For a long time she did not hear from him, but at last a letter came. He was safe in Russia, had work, and was earning enough to support two. He wanted to know—it was just a question and she must understand it thus—whether she would want to come to him. He wanted very much to have her with him, but it was something she ought to think over very carefully. If she did decide to come, he would arrange everything.

She decided to go. An old friend of theirs advised against it. But she went nevertheless, to be with her husband.

It happened that he was living in Siberia. When he had crossed the Russian border without the necessary papers, he had been arrested and shipped to Siberia as a safety measure. Later on the Russians had learned that the German Communist Party had permitted him to leave Germany, and he was released. He had settled down and established a home, if it could be called a home. She could not call it that. Nor could she get used to standing in line for hours every day for each little thing she wanted to buy. Nor accustom herself to the community kitchen, the language, and the cold.

She saw less of her husband than in Hamburg. The working hours were shorter, but the pay was so low that most of the workers worked extra hours. (Then the newspapers announced: The workers of Factory X have offered to go beyond the plan for the first quarter of the year by ten per cent.) And al-

though the Revolution was already won in this country, there were far more meetings here than in Germany. Gradually she grew thinner. At first her husband thought she was physically ill. Then he realized that she was depressed thinking of home, and at the first opportunity he moved to the Caucasus, where there were groups of Germans.

He worked in a village repairing machinery, and she was able to talk in her own language. Here, too, it was not so cold. But she was still depressed, brooding for home. She could not live in Russia. At last her husband realized this and decided to send her back home.

But meanwhile both of them had become Soviet citizens. Her husband therefore wrote to the representative of the German Communist Party and asked for help. He received an answer that the case would be examined.

By now it was 1937. Not even the Caucasian Mountains could stop the wave of arrests. Communists who escaped from Hitler Germany? To prison! Germans who had settled in Russia three centuries earlier, at the invitation of Catherine the Great? They still spoke their old German dialect—to prison with them! The villages were combed; in some scarcely a man was left. Screaming, the women ran after the trucks that carried off their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons.

Anna was left behind, alone. She made every effort to learn what had happened to her husband, but he had simply disappeared. There was now nothing to hold her in this country.

With the help of her neighbors she sold the things she owned and set out for Moscow, all her belongings in a small case. She inquired her way to the building of the Communist International. She told her story. But as soon as she mentioned the word "arrest," she was shown the door. Once more she stood confused in the street.

She recalled that her husband had sometimes spoken of an organization called the Red Aid, and when she reached the proper authority the story was exactly the same. Since her husband had been arrested, he was an enemy of the people and nothing could be done for her.

Once more she was out in the street with her bag, by now exhausted. It occurred to her to try the German *consulate*.

"You have become a Soviet citizen," the German official told her. "We can get you home only if the Soviet authorities release you from being a Soviet citizen. Here is the address of the proper office."

She found the office and an official who could understand her. "If you bring me a statement that the German consulate is willing to restore you to a German citizen, we will release you from being a Soviet citizen," she was told.

She walked back to the German consulate. There the facts were taken down and she was told to come again next day. She went out, wondering where she was going to spend the night. On the street she was arrested and taken to prison. She no longer needed to concern herself about shelter for the night, not for many years.

At the questioning she was told she was a spy like her husband.

Although she was almost twenty years older than I, Anna stayed with me like a frightened child who has at last found someone who cares for her. She forgot what was before her—trial and the threat of transportation. Her only fear was that we would be separated.

* * *

During my fourteen months in prison before my trial I was taken out for questioning three times. The first time just personal information was taken. The second time a statement of my case was written. My record contained the dangerous fact that I came from a middle class family, that I had lived in Holland and Switzerland as a child and had studied in Germany and Italy, and that I had lived in the house of a relative whose guests represented all sorts of political positions. The record concluded with the statement: "I have never belonged to a counter-revolutionary organization," so I signed it. At the third hearing they read me the statement of a prisoner who claimed that she had spoken with me in my hotel room about my counter-revolutionary activities, which were not otherwise defined. I asked to see the woman, but my request was not granted. Later on I learned from prisoners who had shared a cell with her that she had been on the "factory belt" and that after eighteen days and nights without sleep she had signed whatever they asked.

All these questionings occurred in the eighth month after my arrest. In the fourteenth month I was in-

formed of the charge against me. I was charged under Section 58, Article 4: support of a foreign state against the Soviet Union. They told me that this crime carried the supreme punishment, death by shooting, and that I would likely go before the military court.

When I returned to my cell after receiving this information, most of the other prisoners were asleep. That night I did not feel any need for sleep.

"Military court," the examining judge had said. "Death by shooting."

It was not so long ago that I had been a student, wearing an *anti-fascist* button on my coat, distributing papers and holding the bags of my comrades when they had fights with Nazi students. And now, "death by shooting." But the fear I had felt on my first ride to prison fourteen months before did not return. I felt the same weakness that had overcome me when I was arrested, the same terrible feeling that I was helpless and nobody cared. What was not real had become real. It was the original naked state of mankind. But here was not the clean, open struggle of the world before written records; here was a foul, evil-smelling madness where people talked about Marxist truth when they meant that they would knock your teeth out.

"Death by shooting. . . ." The words still remained impossible to understand. Such a death, so undeserved, puzzling, meaningless, was too horrible to be grasped, too impossible to cause fear.

And then, out of the feeling of being alone around me, I heard the voice of the gray-haired woman ly-

ing beside me and felt her swollen yellow hand upon my arm. "Child, why are you crying?"

A few weeks later the little window in the door opened and a dozen names were called. "Get ready with all your things," the guard barked, and closed the window.

With trembling hands Anna packed her few clothes into a bundle and stood with the others at the door. Her face was colorless. They would all be going to trial, we guessed. But Anna was not thinking of that. She was looking at me in horror at the prospect of being separated. And then the little window opened once more and a single additional name was called. It was my turn to tie up my little bundle with trembling hands.

For more than fourteen months I had waited for this moment to come. For fourteen months I had seen women pass through these cells, women who had hoped, cried, cursed and prayed, until finally after a few months the iron door opened for them again and they disappeared from sight. I alone was always left behind. Sometimes I thought I would stay in that cell the rest of my life. And now it was over. What was waiting for me on this fall day of 1938? I ached from all the good-by embraces when I finally took my place at the door beside Anna. I looked at her with concern, but she was calm again. Whatever happened now, we were together.

Then we were let out into the hall. Silently—we were absolutely forbidden to say a word—we began to move. At last the soldier turned us over to another, who let us into a new cell. This was a kind of waiting

room. Some hundred women from various cells stood or sat around in it. Every now and then someone would recognize a friend and rush sobbing into her arms.

We waited. One hour, two, three. Would we be going to trial now? Would we have a chance to defend ourselves? Would there be witnesses?

Then a guard opened the door a crack and shouted, "Quiet!"

There was no need; we had fallen into a dead silence as soon as his face appeared. He told us to form a line at the door, in any order, and disappeared.

Every Soviet citizen is an expert at standing in line. In a moment there was a neat, orderly line going up to the door. But in this line there was no pushing or trying to creep ahead. On the contrary, there were polite offers of, "Would you like to go first?" which were refused with equal politeness.

After a good long wait the door opened slightly again and the first woman was let out. She returned in three minutes and the next went. The method was marvelously effective. Every three minutes a woman came and another went, and each one returned with her prison term. As the number of those who had gone grew, the sobbing in the room became louder. In all corners of the room little groups formed, but nothing could be heard but tearful, whispered phrases: "Ten years . . . eight years . . ." Rarely, someone said, "Five years."

We waited to see whether anyone would be set free—for example the old woman of seventy—but she

too came back with a term of ten years. There were no exceptions; all were condemned.

Anna stood behind me in the line, her eyes opening wide and her thin figure growing smaller. I heard her choked breathing and could feel her trembling. Perhaps I myself was trembling; I did not know.

Then a soldier led me down the hall to another room where an NKVD officer sat at a long table. I was told to sit down in a chair facing him. (The chair was there because prisoners were likely to faint when they received their sentence, and this would slow up the process.)

He asked my name, wet a finger of his right hand and began running through a pile of small slips with the speed of a bank clerk counting money. When he found the right one, he repeated my name, cleared his throat and read in a voice totally without emotion:

"Prisoner Elinor Lipper has been found guilty by the special commission of judges of the NKVD in Moscow at the meeting of . . . of counter-revolutionary activity and has been condemned to five years loss of freedom, to be served in a labor camp. Sign here."

As I signed my name to the slip of paper I pressed my teeth together so loudly that officer looked up in surprise and amusement. Then he shouted, "Next."

The next was Anna. I had just time to give her an encouraging look as I returned with my five-year prison term. Hers was five years too.

Such was our punishment.

Of the hundred women in the cell that night, about ten received five-year terms, about thirty, eight-year,

and the other sixty, ten-year terms. After all had been taken care of, we each received a sheet of paper on which to write the name of a relative who would be trusted with the things we owned during the years in prison. I had no relatives in the Soviet Union and therefore requested that the NKVD take care of my things. My confidence was somewhat extreme for I never saw any of my things again. Shortly before I was sent home I quietly asked an NKVD official about them. He looked at me with honest surprise, as though after ten years in prison I were asking about fresh eggs I had left behind in my room.

Anna's total belongings were her wood case, which had been taken from her when she entered the prison. She cried softly as we were walked slowly down various yards and through gates to the round tower-cell for guilty prisoners. There everybody rushed madly to the boards to get a place. It was as though everybody thought his sole happiness in the coming ten years depended upon those sixteen inches of space; each woman defended hers with bitter despair. Neither Anna nor I had grasped the situation in time, so that we were left sitting on the edge of the platform, surrounded by the feet of exhausted battlers who like us waited awake for morning. Next morning another board was added to the platform, so that we too had our place.

Anna had stopped crying. Now and then she murmured under her breath, "Five years? What for? Five years. . . ."

I choked back my own despair and tried to cheer her. "Five years or ten or twenty—What does it

matter?" I said. "In any case we won't serve them. You must realize that. After all, we aren't among savages. This is a civilized country (Oh, how simple I was!) There are so many cases that mistakes have been made, but they'll be corrected in time. We will write requests, prove our innocence; then our cases will be reviewed and we'll be released. It's just a matter of reaching the right person; then you'll see that everything will be all right." (During the next ten years I wrote requests to every imaginable bureau, but apparently the right person was not in any of them.)

I made such an effort to comfort her that in the end I began to believe my own words. Now and then she looked at me with quiet confidence, and finally we were both smiling in our misery.

A few days later she fell ill. She had a high fever and blood in her water discharge. For a week she twisted in pain on the boards and there was nothing I could do for her but curse the nurses who handed medicine for her in through the window in the door and would not even come in to look at her. Once a month a prisoner had the right to see the prison doctor, who ran through her sick-call in the hall with tremendous speed. I went to her and explained—in anger and in terrible Russian—what was the trouble with Anna. She shouted at me to mind my own affairs, but she examined Anna and had her transferred to the prison hospital that same day. Anna went against her will, for she was afraid that I would be shipped out in the meanwhile. In fact the day we were to be moved, she heard about it by chance and

had herself discharged from the hospital, although she was still hardly strong enough to stand.

THE CHILDREN'S ORGANIZATION

While Anna was in the hospital I had time to become acquainted with my other neighbor on the boards. All I knew about her was that she had received a five-year term in her home town and was now with us waiting to be moved to camp. Shortly before her arrest she had begun studying medicine. She looked like a Russian peasant girl with her red-brown hair, her somewhat short, flat nose, her full mouth, and her strong hands.

"Lydia, what are you thinking about?"

"My father. We were arrested the same day."

"Are you in because of him?"

"No, I was found guilty of failure to accuse. Five years."

"Whom did you . . . fail to accuse?"

"My young brother, my only brother. He was three years younger than me. At the time he was sixteen and going to school. One day I was looking for a pencil in his desk and I discovered something that shocked me. It was a sheet of paper, a paper against the Soviet. And the copying machine that had been used to print it was in his room. That was the time the mass arrests were beginning, and so many children in school had lost their parents. They knew their parents were innocent, and when their fathers and mothers were not released, the children got to-

gether and issued a paper protesting the arrest of their parents."

"Yes," I interrupted, "I've heard that during 1937 and 1938 there was a children's organization in many of the big cities that called itself Revenge for Our Parents. But I imagine it was quickly destroyed by arrests. One of the girls who belonged to the organization was in prison with me and told me a good deal about it."

"I don't know why my brother ever got into it," Lydia went on. "Nobody in our family had been arrested. Anyway, when he came home from school I spoke to him. At first he was frightened to death about my discovery; then he became firm. 'Mind your own business!' he told me angrily. 'I'm old enough to know what I'm doing.'"

"You're old enough to get us all into trouble," I told him. "Don't you realize that father and mother will be held responsible for your actions?"

"He had never thought of that. I suppose he had all sorts of fancy notions about dying a hero for a just cause, but it had never occurred to him that his mother whom he loved could be sent to prison because of him. His firm stand faded and he pleaded with me, 'Lydia, Lydochka, don't tell anybody. I'll take all the things away today. And I promise I will not have any more to do with this business.'"

"He kept his promise, and I said nothing about it at all. But it was already too late. One of his school friends must have betrayed him. A few months later he was arrested, just a week after his seventeenth birthday.

"One day our bell at the door rang. A bearded old carriage driver was standing at the door. In a whisper he asked for my father. I showed him in, but he would not sit down. He looked at my father and at me and finally said suddenly, 'Do you have a boy in prison?'

"My son was arrested a month ago.'

"Do you have any news from him?' I asked.

"Well,' the driver growled, and then he became silent for a while. 'I sometimes drive prisoners from the city prison to the NKVD prison for questioning when the prison vans are too crowded. This morning I took one of them, a young boy, and one guard. When we turned into this street he asked the soldier to stop for a minute, just a few seconds, because his parents lived here on the corner, on the second floor. He just wanted to run up to see his mother for a moment. But the soldier said no. Then he begged, 'Just let me go up for a minute, just to look at my mother who's sick, and I'll be right down.' But the soldier said, 'Silence. Impossible.' We were just riding past the house, and suddenly the boy jumped out of the carriage. Before I could say halt to stop my horses, the soldier shot him.'

"Dead?' my father cried out.

"Dead,' the driver nodded. Then he left.

"A few days later we had to take my mother to a mental hospital. So at least she was not there when my father and I were arrested. It wasn't enough for the NKVD that my brother was dead.

"At my hearing I told them everything just as it had happened. I hoped that at least they would

release my father, who really knew nothing about the whole business of the papers. But they blamed it all on him, because he was in charge of us. He was given eight years for counter-revolutionary activity. A woman in my cell who was in the prison hospital at the same time as Father told me what his term was. And they gave me five years for not speaking against my dead brother."

THE TRANSFER

After several weeks in the cell the day came when we were marched out of the prison gate, a silent, varied lot of unhappy women, young and old, each of us still wearing the clothes we had had on when we were arrested. The clothes of some even showed traces of former good style. But all of us had the seats of our skirts worn through from moving around on the rough boards.

Filled with fear of the unknown, the first thing we saw was the prison truck, the "*Black Raven*" as the fearful truck is called in Russia. Down a lane of battle ready rifles we walked. From that moment on we were condemned counter-revolutionaries, the worst sort of criminals, far guiltier than any murderer.

Towards evening we were loaded into a cattle car of a train. Our group of some twenty-five women raised the total number of women in the car to about a hundred. These other prisoners were all female criminals who greeted our entry with loud

shouts of evil enthusiasm, doubtful admiration, and a rain of the dirtiest curse words. We were getting our first taste of the fact that not only prison officials, camp commanders, and all kinds of guards would be making our lives a hell during the years to come, but our own fellow prisoners as well.

They lay in three layers on the familiar boards, beside, above, and on top of one another, staring at us, pointing at us, laughing, mocking, smiling, and spitting with scorn at our feet. In the quivering light of the candles their faces seemed evil, vice filled, and savage. There was no trace of sympathy or mercy in those faces. A creature dressed in man's clothes, with a cap pulled low down over a wide, dark-skinned, cruel face, was the leader. She cursed us when we politely asked for a few free places on the boards. "Go to the devil, you dogs," she said slowly, and the others smiled approval.

We remained awake all that night, pressed close together for warmth. The heavy iron sliding door was locked from outside and only a dim trace of light entered the car from two tiny barred windows.

I could not see Anna's face, but I could feel the slight movement of her arm now and then as she wiped away her endless tears. Once or twice I heard her whisper, "Oh my God, my God, what for, what for?"

I suppose that those who could pray, prayed that night. I stared steadily up at the place where the window must be, until finally at dawn the dark bars showed against a patch of brighter sky.

When the commander of the cattle car came for

the morning count, we requested him to put us into another cattle car. We were lucky. The train was not leaving that day and another group of counter-revolutionaries like ourselves had arrived from Tula Prison, so that there were enough to fill a whole second car. All the other twenty-eight cars were crowded with male prisoners.

Sometime during the second night the train began moving. We traveled for weeks and none of us knew where. It is not the custom in Soviet law practice to inform prisoners what camp they are being sent to. There are three kinds of camps:

1. Near—camps in European Russia.
2. Distant—camps in Siberia and Central Asia.
3. Remote—camps in the Arctic regions and the far northeast.

When our train began to twist its way through the Ural Mountains, we knew that the European camps were not for us.

We were given hard-frozen bread to eat and a teaspoon of sugar a day. Water was a precious luxury, although it was usually swamp water and handed around in dirty cans. Sometimes we were so thirsty we tried to wet our tongue on the round iron plates set in the wall. They were coated with frost because of the cold. The train ran only a few hours at a time—it rarely covered more than a hundred and fifty miles in twenty-four hours. But although it stood on side tracks for half a day at a time and we often shouted, "Water, water, we want water," for hours at a time, nobody paid any attention. After ten days of

traveling almost every one of us suffered from dysentery.

We warmed ourselves most of the time by looking at the friendly little round iron stove. It was very seldom that we asked this little black friend to work for us, for we received coal or coal dust at most once every three days. Then we eagerly filled the stove with our bare hands, since we had no *shovel*, and for an hour crowded around the fire. Then we crawled silently back on our boards, each one of us alone, a helpless, abandoned creature with too few blankets, too few clothes, too thin blood to fight the ice cold Siberian winter wind that whistled through many cracks. Then there was only cold, darkness, and the rattle of the train.

One night I was wakened by a movement beside me, and at once I realized that something was wrong with Anna.

"Anna," I whispered, "Anna, what are you doing?"

She was silent. I felt for her hands to make her lie down. In her hands she had a rope which she was trying to fasten to the ceiling of the car. I pulled her over to me by force and threw away the rope.

"Anna, Anna, how could you do it?"

"Oh, why don't you let me die? Why not? Why should I suffer for years in this country where life was impossible even when I was at liberty? What for? Can you tell me that?"

I could not. I could only hold her firmly in my arms and give her a little warmth from my own frozen body.

We had been on the way for three weeks when

the sliding door was rolled open with a rattling noise and the commander of the car read out a long list and told the women whose names were called to get off the train. Only thirteen women were left. I was among them. Anna was among those who were called.

That was how we parted. Anna and I. I stood at the door and watched her sad walk through the deep Siberian snow in her dark-blue raincoat and her cloth shoes. Then the iron door was closed and locked again.

WE ARRIVE IN VLADIVOSTOK

On the thirty-fifth day the train stopped, the door opened and the guards shouted, "All of you, get your things and get out." With eyes half shut we stood on the tracks for a moment. Then the guards with their dogs were all around us, shouting. "Get down. Stay down. If anyone stands up, we will take it as an attempt to escape and shoot instantly." The twenty-eight hundred men and thirteen women got down in rows of five, heads bowed, limbs stiff, keeping their balance with difficulty. In the cold November wind the gray-green faces of the prisoners turned blue. The wind brought with it the smell of ocean. We had reached Vladivostok.

We were marched down a highway at a lightning pace. After about an hour the first gate of our first camp opened—Vladivostok transfer camp. We were driven into a square within a solid high fence of

boards. The small group of women were a little to the side of the men.

We spent the entire day out in the square, in the middle of a strong November wind. Again and again we were counted, registered, and called up. Later the men were taken to the bath in small groups. The bath could take care of only twenty people at a time, and the women had to wait until last. We were given nothing to eat. It was long after dark before the group of women was taken to the bath. It consisted of a cold hut divided into three rooms: room to undress, room to wash, and room to dress. The room to undress and the room to dress were to one side of the room to wash and were connected by a disease preventing chamber.

We had to strip naked and hang all our clothing on an iron ring which was then handed to the man in charge. It was a man, and not an old man. His arms, tattooed from wrist to shoulder, and his comments on the naked women who filed past him, indicated to us that he was a criminal prisoner. Then we waited, purple with cold, until two more criminals on camp duty appeared. They were a man to cut hair and a medical aid. The medical aid examined our heads for head insects. Any woman who had them was shaved to the skin. Then all the women had to line up before the man to have their hair cut and to have their private and underarm hair shaved. He paid no attention to the sobs and protests. There was no woman to cut hair in the camp, he said. When some of us refused, the attendant in charge of the bath—another criminal—came in, made some dirty remarks

about our modesty, and threatened to call the commander of the guard. We decided that enough criminals had looked at our naked bodies and resigned ourselves to being shaved. It was done with a single dull blade which was neither washed nor treated between persons.

In the room to wash we were each given four tenths of an ounce of soap and a wooden bath which we were allowed to fill twice with not very warm water. Then the water was stopped. In the dressing room our supposedly disease free clothes lay in a pile on the dirty stone floor where before us twenty-eight hundred men from our train had dressed. Still trembling with cold, we got dressed.

We were led along a path lighted too brightly by large lights and edged barbed wire, and up a hill to the special zone for counter-revolutionaries. The women's barrack was surrounded by several barbed-wire fences. The guard unlocked a wooden gate, opened the door, announced that here were thirteen new prisoners, and vanished. Now, we thought, we would have our first night in peace after thirty-five days of travel. We no longer remembered that we were hungry; we could think of nothing but sleep.

It must have been about midnight when we pushed our way in through the door. We got no further. The entire floor was covered with sleeping bodies. The board platforms, in two layers along both walls, were bent under the weight of the women who lay pressed together on them from wall to edge. The barrack attendant, a red-haired woman, told us she could not assign us places because there were none. Neverthe-

less, a few kindly women moved closer together on the floor to make a little room. I had been the last to come in, and as I was also more afraid to disturb than the others, I found no place at all. The air in the barrack was foul and hot from the breath of about two hundred and fifty women. The building was sixty-five feet long and twenty-two feet wide. I went out and walked back and forth in the yard, from one barbed-wire wall to the other. Each time I passed the barrack I looked and felt for some nail extending out. There was no proper nail anywhere, but each time I looked up along the wall I saw the flash of a rifle in the watch tower. With a loud noise the soldier on guard blew his nose between his fingers. (The masses of the people consider handkerchiefs pure luxury.) So I would get nowhere trying to hang myself. I continued wondering up and down a while until the cold forced me back into the barrack. I saw a tiny space on the lower platform where a sleeping woman had pulled up her legs. But as soon as I settled carefully down she stretched and without opening her eyes gave me such a kick that I fell to the floor. In this way I obtained a few inches of space on the floor and fell asleep.

VLADIVOSTOK TRANSFER CAMP

Prisoners who were going to Kolyma in northeastern Siberia were sent to Vladivostok from all over the country. They were kept in the transfer camp until they could be sent to Kolyma by ship. But be-

tween December and May all communication by water with Kolyma is cut off by ice. Since every ship can carry "only" seven thousand prisoners, the prisoners often have to wait half a year at the transfer camp. I spent six and a half months at Vladivostok.

Here, in this collecting place for prisoners from all over the country, was clear proof that not a corner of the Soviet Union had been spared in the mass arrests. Everywhere the same methods of questioning were being applied. Everywhere the same strange process was followed: the first to be arrested were the former officials of the government or economic, and military agencies, then everybody who had had official or friendly contact with them, and finally everybody who was related to them by blood or marriage.

In the eyes of every prisoner you could read the question, Why? and none of them had the answer.

It was not only my own fate that made me bitter, nor was it only shame at the memory that only a year and a half ago I had praised and defended this Soviet system as progress toward paradise on earth. More strongly than anything else I felt the consuming pain of helpless pity for these patient Russian, Caucasian, Tartar, Central Asiatic, Mongolian, and Siberian villagers. They took their strange fate with the dumb acceptance of beaten animals.

There were two zones in the Vladivostok transfer camp, one for criminals and the other for counter-revolutionaries. The criminals were assigned to all types of labor, received better food, lived in heated barracks, and each one had a bed, a straw bag and

blankets of his own. Some of them were given permits and could move about with relative freedom. The zone for the counter-revolutionaries was divided into several smaller sections, each of which was surrounded by a cluster of barbed-wire fences. The wooden gate was always shut and there were watch towers at the corners of the fence.

At night bright lights lighted the entire area and groups of guards constantly walked around the barracks with their trained dogs.

In the cold and frequently not lighted barracks the counter-revolutionaries slept on two or three layers of rough boards and had no straw bags or blankets.

Staying clean was out of the question. The criminals could get water at all times, but a far too small number of counter-revolutionaries were assigned to bring water. Water was brought in cans from a distance of a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards, and only once a day. The tiny portion of water for each prisoner was scarcely enough for drinking, without any left for washing. Now and then the female prisoners were able to beg a few extra cans, and then furious battles for water began among them. Screaming wildly, they fell upon the cans, snatched them from each other, pulled each other's hands, and cried.

We became so covered with body insects that we stopped trying to kill them. Now and then we would reach under our clothes when we could no longer endure them, pull out a bunch of them, and throw them away. As often as not they fell not on the floor, but on other prisoners.

Since body insects are carriers of spotted fever, a frightful spread of spotted fever occurred in the camp in 1938. It killed thousands of prisoners. The camp hospital was so crowded with the sick, who lay on every bed and along all the floors of the rooms and halls, that any kind of care was impossible. Some of the women from our barrack were called in to act as nurses. Their chief occupation was to count the dead who had escaped the misery of the gold mines which awaited the others.

The barracks were so full of the bed insects that sleep was almost impossible at night, when the creatures are most active. From the walls and the boards, above and beneath us, they came crawling; they fell upon the suffering bodies of the prisoners who twisted and turned at the stinging bites and tried to catch them. But no matter how many were crushed, new multitudes of them always take their place and the struggle would last until dawn, when the exhausted victims were at last able to sleep. In spring, when it got warmer, the armies of bed insects attacking us increased steadily, until at last we decided to sleep on the ground outside the barrack. And then there took place a spectacle that we watched with speechless horror. From the empty building the armies of bed insects marched in close order, a long, dark crawling procession crossing the doorway after their victims who could not believe their eyes.

Everyone in the transfer camp of Vladivostok had to resign himself to being shipped off to Kolyma sooner or later. One day a book on raw materials, weather conditions, production found its way into our barrack. We passed over the pages on fishing and the fur animals in which the Kolyma district was rich, and we paid little attention to the fact that there were gold and silver mines in the area. What was impressed upon our minds forever were the three sentences about the cold. "Even in summer the earth here is still frozen at a depth of eight and a half inches. The lowest temperatures on earth have been recorded in this region. In winter the temperature drops to seventy degrees below *centigrade* (-94° F.) and even lower."

Early in May 1939 the first news of a ship waiting for us at the port finally reached us. It was the steam ship "Dalstroï," and one bright, warm day we vanished into it. There were seven thousand prisoners, among them five hundred women in a separate section.

During the entire trip, which lasted a week, no member of the guard or the ship's crew ever entered the prisoners' section. They were afraid to, especially when a large number of murderers and robbers were being shipped, since they were a very small, though heavily armed, number compared to the number of prisoners. They stood with raised guns, ready to

shoot, when the prisoners were let out on deck in small groups to use the *toilet*. None of them took any notice of what occurred below decks. As a result, during all such trips the criminals establish a rule of terror. If they want the clothes of any of the counter-revolutionaries, they take it from him. If the counter-revolutionary resists, he is beaten. The old and weak are robbed of their bread. On every transfer ship a number of prisoners die as a result of such treatment.

In the course of every trip some counter-revolutionaries attempt to kill themselves by jumping into the sea. Usually they drown quietly.

In 1944 several hundred young girls came to Kolyma. They were sent out for absences without permit from a war factory, or for some similar small offense. During the war the number of guards was reduced everywhere, and on the ships as well. The criminals, who formed the greater part of the human freight on this ship, had absolute freedom of action inside it. They broke through the wall into the room where the female prisoners were kept and made sex attacks on all the women whom they chose. A few male prisoners who tried to protect the women were killed. Several old men had their bread snatched from them day after day, and died of hunger. One of the criminals, who took for himself a woman whom the leader of the group had marked for his own, had his eyes put out with a needle. When the ship arrived in Magadan and the prisoners were brought outside, fifteen were missing; they had been killed by the criminals during the trip and the guards had not lifted a finger. The result of this particularly horrible incident

was that after the facts became known in Magadan, the commander of the ship's guard was called to give an account and was arrested.

We lay pressed together on the black floor of our section because the criminals had taken for themselves the board platform. If one of us dared to raise her head, she was greeted by a rain of heads of fish from above. When any of the seasick criminals threw up, the foul stuff come down on us. At night, the men criminals got the guard, who was posted on the stairs to our section, to send over a few women for them. They paid the guard in bread they had stolen from their fellow prisoners.

KOLYMA

May Heaven preserve man from enduring
what man is able to endure!

WE ARRIVE IN MAGADAN

Now we were in Kolyma where I was to spend eight years of my life. The first wood houses of the town rose before us. We marched along Stalin Street, one of the main streets, at that time rough and not finished. At the end we came to the Magadan baths, the pride of the town. Here the people kept clean in

large shower rooms which were used one day for free citizens and the next for prisoners. We new ones entered the baths in a variety of clothes and left them as Kolyma Prisoners, all dressed in the same thick dark coat and with a head cover of black-and-white checked cotton. At the woman's ship there were the barbed wire, the characteristic high wood fences, the guards and the watch tower. Through the gate we saw figures in the camp and soon we mixed with them, shared the boards with them, shared their hunger and labor and the fierce embrace of terrible cold, shared loss of hope and stern silence.

WE DEVELOP KOLYMA: BERZIN—GARANIN—
—VYSHNYEVETSKY

Kolyma, a region in the northeast part of Siberia, is named after the Kolyma River. Its borders are on the north, the Arctic Ocean; on the east, the Sea of Okhotsk, an arm of the Pacific, on the south and west thick, never cut forests (taiga). There is no railroad into the area. On Russian maps it is marked as being directly under the authority of the Executive Committee of the Ministry of the Interior (NKVD). There is no civil authority; there are no local elections. The region's candidate for the Supreme Soviet, however, is approved by a general election. It is a region of vast forests, enormous swamps, round hills, the entire area divided by great rivers. Two weeks of spring are followed by three hot summer months during which stinging insects are present in clouds,

then two weeks of fall and eight months of winter with its terrible cold.

In this country the experts found great wealth in gold. To mine the vast treasure would require armies of workers. The solution was found swiftly, for there is an endless supply of one kind of human material in the Soviet Union—prisoners.

In 1934, Berzin, a member of the People's Ministry of the Interior (NKVD) was put in charge of Kolyma. His task was to produce gold out of this empty space, out of the never cut forest and the ice. The early years took a frightful price in lives, and he realized that the army of prisoners—at that time it consisted mainly of criminals—could produce well only if it were well fed, warmly dressed, and paid enough. During the last years of his administration Berzin managed to establish these necessary conditions, in spite of being cut off entirely from all sources of supplies during six months of the year.

Forests were cleared and an excellent broad highway was begun; it now runs for hundreds of miles through the entire country. This highway, built on the bones of thousands of prisoners, runs from Magadan across the northwest gold territory to the gold mines further west in Indigirka; from there it runs southwest across the Aldan, a branch of the Lena, to Yakutsk on the Lena, the capital of the Yakut Soviet Socialist Republic. As yet it can be used only in winter when the ground is frozen. A railroad is also planned which will rescue the country from being completely alone. Magadan, the capital of the area, was built, and all through the region, in the neighbor-

hood of the large gold mines, there sprang up small villages of free citizens in addition to the large prison camps. The forest was cleared for five large state farms with grass land for cattle and land for plowing.

The main crop of these state farms, which are worked entirely by women prisoners, is *cabbage*. The coarse outer leaves are used for prisoners; the cabbage heads are for the free citizens. The soup that is made out of the leaves is called by the prisoners "khaki soup" because of its greenish-brown color. Some potatoes are also planted, although in much smaller quantities; the crop is always in danger from the early frosts and is intended solely for the free population. In addition, other vegetables are grown and grain is planted; the grain does not become ripe but is prized as green food for the cattle.

Because of the limited amount of free labor, hunting and fishing are largely left to the native population. There are, however, five large fish industries; the fish are caught by men, and cleaned, salted, and packed mostly by women prisoners. The fish consists mostly of *herring* which forms an essential part of the prison food.

Most of the gold mining in Kolyma is done below ground. But some of it is done by a simple screening process, each man working by himself or with a single partner. The average production is seven tenths of an ounce of pure gold per man per day. The season for screening gold is about a hundred days. But months before, the work of preparation is done; this consists in removing the layers of rich earth which cover the ground everywhere in Kolyma. In the mines below

ground machines and small bombs are used. The pace of the work is so furious that the use of these bombs causes frequent accidents and prisoners are made lame or killed. There are also many tales of workers who in despair let themselves be killed by the bombs. At the end of each day's labor the workers, free men as well as prisoners, are searched with extreme care, although there would be little purpose in stealing gold, since there is no place to sell it. All the gold that is dug belongs to the state and anyone who tried to sell it would be proving himself guilty of stealing.

But although they have no personal share in the product, the prisoners are nevertheless overcome by a kind of gold fever, especially those who wash the gold directly out of the river sands. Many of them have told me how they trembled when they saw the pure metal shining in their hands. They are sent out to discover areas that will bear gold. If they find a rich deposit, they keep it secret so that they can screen out their daily amount without being disturbed. If they should deliver a much larger amount of gold over a period of several days they will receive more tobacco, but they will also attract the production leader's attention and he will send a larger number of workers to the area—enough so that each has to work hard to meet the required amount—or in the case of really big finds he will bring a machine for washing out the gold.

The streams of Kolyma and Indigirka are so rich in gold that for the present no attempt is being made to work the gold mines with a system. New mining camps are opened constantly, and the prisoners fear

them because the living conditions are so rude and wild. Usually the only shelters are tents and there are no straw beds or any other equipment; the prisoners are lucky if they can get hold of a blanket, and day and night workers take turns in sleeping on the same narrow boards, which are like box tops arranged in three layers.

The more gold there is, the more prisoners—and the more body insects.

During the hundred-day season for screening gold some two hundred thousand men are employed and the gold taken out amounts to about four hundred tons a year, in value some \$460,000,000.

The 1937 wave of terror also crushed the rulers of the Kolyma gold mines. When Yagoda, head of the NKVD, fell, his whole organization fell with him. Berzin, then in charge of Kolyma, was arrested, taken to Moscow and shot, although he had achieved great success in gold mining and laid the foundation for the work of those who followed him. His wife also was arrested; she was a pale, delicate woman with whom I shared a group cell in Butyrka Prison in 1938. Yeshov, who took the place of Yagoda, along with the then Chief Attorney of the Soviet Union, crushed millions of human beings in his thousands of prisons. It was the first wave of the NKVD horror which Stalin had begun.

During the years 1937 and 1938 the cream of Russia's intelligence were destroyed. All who were still capable of independent thinking and independent decisions, all those who still knew what the word socialism meant, who still had some ideas of a good

society, all those whose vision of freedom was not yet twisted, were to be robbed of their influence and killed.

Garanin, who took the place of Berzin in Kolyma, was a worthy associate of the men now in authority in Moscow. At that time the Kolyma "population" rose tremendously; about a hundred thousand prisoners were now brought in each year. These new prisoners were mainly counter-revolutionary elements; that is, mostly people who had never done any physical work. Men of science, art, education, politicians, leaders of industry, trade, and government, went out every morning on the horror march to the gold mines.

In 1938 Garanin decided to destroy thousands of thinkers. From this time on there were no more fur clothes for the prisoners. The standard equipment became stuffed short coats and pants which soon hung like torn rags upon the bodies of the thin prisoners. The warm boots were replaced by shoes made of cloth, and almost every mine worker suffered from frozen feet. The miserable food portions of the prisoners did not contain enough fat; the chief element was bread. But the quantity of bread in all Soviet camps depends on the amount of work the prisoner performs. He gets more bread or less according to whether he fills or does more or less than the required amount. Each worker's record is listed by free men in charge or by criminals, who are favored as leaders for such positions. It is common practice for the men in charge to give part of the work performed by counter-revolutionaries to the criminals who "buy" these men in various ways. The counter-revolution-

aries are without the things to do the same. But even if the work performed is listed honestly, it is impossible for a person not accustomed to physical labor to complete the required amount. He quickly falls into a hopeless circle. Since he cannot do his full amount of work, he does not receive the full bread portion; his hungry body is still less able to fill the demands, and so he gets less and less bread. In the end he is so weak that only beatings can force him to drag himself from camp to gold mine. Once he reaches the mine he is too weak to hold the shovel, and to run the machinery; he is too weak to defend himself when a criminal hits him in the face and takes away his day's portion of bread. He uses his last remaining strength to creep off to an out-of-the-way corner where neither the curses of the guards, the blows of the men in charge, nor their eternal cry of, "Get going!" can reach him. Only the terrible cold finds him and with mercy gives him his sole desire: peace, sleep, death.

But Garanin was not satisfied with this sort of destruction of the "enemies of the people." It was too slow for him. Therefore he traveled from camp to camp examining the list of counter-revolutionaries. He took special note of those who were convicted of KRTD (counter-revolutionary Trotskyist activity).

"Which of these have not filled their required amount?" he would ask.

Most had not, could not. At evening roll call, when they returned from the mines, he would call out these victims, curse them as saboteurs who were trying to continue their criminal counter-revolutionary Trotskyist activities even in camp, and he would have

them driven in a crowd out of the gate. At a short distance from the camp they would be shot all together under his personal direction.

This was still not enough. At night he would have thousands of enemies of the people taken out of all the Kolyma camps, loaded on to trucks and driven off to a prison. This prison, called Serpantinka, is about three hundred and seventy-five miles west of Magadan, in the midst of the forest. It is probably one of the most horrible institutions in the Soviet Union. Only ice and snow, mountains and forests, were the witnesses at the death-rattle of those tortured men who uttered their last scream of terror before they were shot. Only a few fortunate prisoners, who were condemned merely to a ten-year addition to their term, came back from this prison to the labor camps. Years later they were so gripped by the horror of it that they did not dare to tell their fellow prisoners of the terrible things they had seen and experienced. When they at last brought themselves to speak of it, they looked anxiously around to make sure that no informer was near. In short whispers they told of how Garanin, the Communist, had ordered thousands of innocent persons to be tortured and shot to death at Serpantinka during 1938.

It was estimated that Garanin had the deaths of some twenty-six thousand persons on his conscience. Twenty-six thousand people were killed in one year before the alarming reports of some who assisted Garanin forced Moscow to act. He was finally recalled. According to some, he was given fifteen years of prison labor; according to others, he was shot. Most

of the additional terms he had given were removed, but a certain percentage of the prisoners—in spite of all their written protests and requests—were held without explanation to the extra ten-year term—if they could live through it.

Along with Garanin, his chief in Moscow, Yeshov, also vanished. Yeshov was responsible, with the knowledge of the chief of state, for condemning millions of innocent persons. Officially he was transferred at the end of 1938 to the People's Department for Water Transportation; afterward he disappeared from view. Thus the man who had knowledge as performer and associate of an enormous number of crimes was destroyed. His assistant Vyshinsky, the then Chief Attorney of the Soviet Union, soon afterward began a new career in the People's Department (now Ministry) for Foreign Affairs.

Vyshnyevetsky (not to be confused with Vyshinsky) succeeded Garanin and served as chief of Kolyma from 1938 to 1941. No change was made in the treatment, clothing, or food of the prisoners. But the quick trials and the shootings of prisoners without trial ended. The death rate among the miners remained at a constant 30 per cent, to which no one objected.

WOMEN'S CAMPS

INTO THE TAIGA

Each morning at the Magadan women's camp the labor groups went out. Slowly they moved forward toward the open gate of the camp. Today the search at the gate was more strict than usual and a few women were kept back out of every group. They would not have to march out to work, but they were in no way happy about it. Pale and disturbed, they stepped aside and waited while the others marched past them, until the gate was shut behind the last woman. For weeks and months they had waited with fear for this moment. They were to be sent into the wild forests. Taiga! The very word was filled with horror.

They were told to give back all camp properties and to pack up the few things they owned. They asked where they were to be sent, but received no answer as usual; no prisoner is ever told why he is being called. But these women knew nevertheless. They knew each other, and more than half of them were expecting children. The latest medical commission several weeks before had revealed their carefully guarded secrets. Now they were to be sent to Elgen, the punishment camp for women. How far away was it? Three hundred miles? Four hundred?

The truck was ready. Its body was a long box made of thin boards. In the center was a tiny iron stove

and a still tinier supply of wood. "You won't freeze," the guard remarked. "You'll keep each other warm."

It was crowded enough, certainly. Thirty women carrying the things they owned stumbled over one another. After the door was shut the only light came from cracks around the opening for the chimney pipe in the roof of the truck.

On the afternoon of the second day they arrived in Elgen. Valentina Mikhailovna Zimmermann, for many years the dreaded commander of the camp, was present in person and watched with silent, severe coldness as each woman stepped out.

The new prisoners would not be sent to chop wood. That was not allowed from the sixth month of expecting a child. In winter they could shovel snow and in the spring do work in the field. During the ninth month the women would be relieved of work and placed in the group receiving the highest portion of food (twenty-one ounces of bread daily).

THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE

The children come into the world in the prison hospital. For a week mother and child stay together. Then the mother is sent away from the hospital and the child taken to the children's house. The mother does not have to work for the first month after the birth of the child. Then she is sent to work at a place fairly near the children's house, for it is Russian custom that the mother has the right to nurse her baby

for nine months. At certain times the nursing mothers are assembled and taken under guard to the house.

The mothers are not admitted into the children's room. The babies are brought to them in an empty room called the "feeding room." Here, sitting on wood benches, they breast feed the babies seven times, five times, or twice a day, according to their age. Afterward the mothers return to their work under guard. After nine months of breast are over the mother has the right to see the baby for two hours once a month, if she remains in Camp Elgen or near there. Commander Zimmermann had a savage hate for these mothers. It made her red with anger that in spite of threats and punishments prisoners went on bringing children into the world. Besides, the mothers were a burden to the camp owing to their shorter hours of work. And so she stopped these limited visiting hours during the months from May to September saying that the prisoners could not be released from field work.

The children's house at Elgen shelters an average of between two hundred and fifty and three hundred children. They remain there until the end of their seventh year. They are then transferred to the school at Talon. Here they go to school with the Yakut children. They no longer see their mothers.

The children's house includes several large barracks where the children are divided into groups according to age. The head of it is a free woman doctor who is assisted by a prisoner woman doctor. In every group there is one free leader and one prisoner, both women, for the day and night staffs; one leader is in charge

of twenty to twenty-five children. Infants are cared for entirely by prisoners, and prisoners alone work in the kitchen, and the sewing room.

Chiefly criminals are selected for work in the children's house. But since they are altogether not suited for their tasks, there is a constant struggle between the head of the house and the commandant of the camp, who does not want to send counter-revolutionaries to such preferred work. Even a good leader, however, does not have the time to give the least attention to any individual child. She just about manages to place the children one after another on the too few little pots, to clean their faces quickly, with the small amount of water for their use, to dry the little creatures all of whose heads are shaved, with the same towel, and to stuff their food into them as fast as possible. These children rarely have toys; they rarely smile. They learn to talk late and they never experience affection.

The smaller children forget their mothers from one visit to the next. Just when they are beginning to become friends again, a guard comes and calls the mothers. "Come on now, get going, it's time." Children are always crying in the children's house and it always seems to each mother that the one crying is her own.

ELGEN WOMEN'S CAMP

Three hundred and fifty-five miles northwest of the port of Magadan is the women's regimen camp of

Elgen. "Regimen" means a more severe system, or reform camp.

I had already passed through the women's camps in Magadan, Balagannoye, Talon, and the camp for sick prisoners near Magadan. In the fourth year of my term in Kolyma I was shipped to Elgen. This was not to punish me for anything I had done, but because I was a foreigner. I am looking ahead here in describing Elgen because I want to give a picture of daily camp life, before I go into my experiences in Magadan, which were connected mostly with my work in the prisoners' hospital there.

At entrance to the small settlement of Elgen we are greeted by a wooden, green-painted arch, which in huge red letters says, "Long live the great Stalin." We may be ragged, hungry, covered with body insects, but the great Stalin is with us wherever we go.

Then comes another arch, a large wooden one with a gate beneath, which says:

ELGEN MAIN CAMP

Women's Camp of the Administration for Northeast
Reform Labor Camps of the NKVD

There are two rows of barbed wire outside the wood fence circling the entire camp except for the entrance. Inside the camp there are also two rows

of barbed wire; if prisoners approach closer than a yard to them the guards may shoot without warning. At the corners are wooden watch towers, each with its guard. The gate is so wide that the usual rows of five prisoners can be admitted easily. Next to the gate is a narrow door connected with the room of the guard.

His room is a small wood structure. It has a small window that looks out on the road, so that the commander can see anyone approaching the camp. On the commander's desk is a book listing all the names of the camp prisoners by groups and by their places of work. No prisoner may enter or leave the camp without permission from the commander.

After passing the room of the guard, you are in the assembly ground where the prisoners gather to march out to work. Their assembly ground continues on and becomes the main street of the camp. On the left, opposite the guard, is the cage. Then, on both sides of the street, are the barracks, five on each side. There are no water pipes, of course, and the water is brought from a small stream a good distance away from the camp. When the stream is frozen over, as it is eight months of the year, the ice is cut through with an iron rod, and the hole thus made has to be opened again every day when water is brought in.

Living as close to nature as we prisoners did, spending, for example, twelve hours a day chopping wood in the forest, more than satisfied our desire for fresh air. It did not disturb us at all that the windows in the barracks could not be opened. During the three short summer months an open window would

only admit the insects. And in winter we were always hunting for rags, pieces of rope, bits of board and paper to stuff the holes and the cracks in the windows. Storm windows were not used, although the winter temperature dropped to seventy and eighty below 0.

The barracks where we lived were about sixty-five to seventy feet long, twenty-two to twenty-five feet wide, and housed about one hundred prisoners. They are one-floor structures made of boards.

If a prisoner does not develop stomach trouble from the food, he develops it from the daily problem of drying his clothes. If you come back to camp with your labor group at night, rush into the barrack just ahead of another group, and get to the stove first with your wet foot-rags, you are lucky and can get a good place to dry your things. You must be thankful if you find your foot-rags at all in the morning, since the criminals have the pleasant habit of taking the foot-rags of others if they like them better than their own. It is impossible to realize what foot-rags mean until you have worked twelve hours in the rain, snow, and frost, in fields, swamps, and woods, wearing shoes that scarcely deserve the name.

The washing arrangements are marvelously clever. The water is in a tin container. It drops out slowly through three holes. Under the container is a narrow tin basin with a drain in the center. The dirty water flows into a can under this drain. If the can is not there you are not allowed to wash. If anyone has set his heart on a luxury like bathing his feet, he must

wait for the night when the demands on the can are not so heavy.

The drying cloth you received from the camp administration had either become torn long ago, or you have cut it up for a foot-rag, since neither stockings nor foot-rags were given out by the camp after the beginning of the war. Thus, everyone was always searching for something with which to wrap her feet. How we blessed the Americans for delivering their flour in such splendid white bags. I don't imagine the American flour manufacturers had any idea what luxury articles were made out of those bags—from under clothes to fancy outer garments. We had a difficult time getting the American bags from the free women of the area, who also prized them for making all sorts of fancy covers. In addition, there was the risk that during the daily search by the guard we might be caught with such a bag. This would have meant confinement in the cage, since the bag would be stolen property. . . . While I am speaking of American goods I should mention that all our drinking cups and eating bowls were made out of American tin cans, the contents of which, naturally, had been eaten by the free citizens.

Each bed was double, made of boards and four feet wide, with another bed about three feet above it. This made room for four persons, so that each had about two feet to herself. The one in the lower bed could just sit up without hitting the upper bed with her head. Whether the person in the upper bed could sit up at all depended on the height of the barrack;

in a barrack with low ceiling she could not enjoy the luxury of sitting.

A so-called straw sack went with each prisoner's bed. There was no straw in it and rarely hay, because there was not enough hay for the cattle; instead it contained wood shavings or extra clothes, if a prisoner still owned any extra clothes. In addition there was a wool blanket and a pillowcase which you could stuff with whatever you had, for there were no pillows. Then you also received two sheets; one for use and the second to be put aside and used to dress up the barracks on orders from above. This second sheet was spread over the wool blanket so that an innocent stranger or one of the numerous and well-paid Soviet examining commissions would be greeted with the sight of pleasant white beds.

In every barrack an older woman, medically proved as not fit for hard work, was on barrack duty. She would sweep and wash the floor, bring drinking water and water for washing, throw out used water and waste, keep the stoves burning and, with the aid of prisoners who took turns helping her, cut and split wood for the fire. She brought food to the sick who were excused from work, collected dirty clothes once a month and took them to the prison wash house outside the camp, brought back the washed clothes and distributed them. Her bread portion was seventeen and a half ounces when the top amount for prisoners was twenty-one ounces; when this top amount was reduced to seventeen and a half ounces in 1941-43, she received fourteen ounces, and no pay at all from the camp. But it was the custom for the

other prisoners of the barrack to make a free collection every month, so that she usually received more money than any of the other prisoners. All knew that what few nice things of life they had in the camp depended on this old woman. Everyone was grateful to her. When we came back to the barrack, soaking wet, frozen, and exhausted, she was there to welcome us with a friendly, motherly smile. She managed to steal a little extra wood somewhere in the camp—the official amount of wood was always foolishly small; she made sure that the “tea” was hot and in sufficient quantity; and she did not complain too much about the snow that everyone tracked into the barrack. And it was she who would wake us up in the morning when we refused to hear the bell for rising.

NUNS, THIEVES, “BUSINESS,” AND LOVERS

ARTICLE 124 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE USSR

“For the purpose of assuring freedom of conscience to the citizens of the USSR the church is separated from the state and the schools from the church. The freedom to practice religious ceremonies and the freedom to attack religious beliefs is extended to all citizens.”

During the war, in the hour of need, the rulers of the USSR remembered God. Everything had to be

done to inspire the very least of Soviet citizens with absolute devotion to his country. In spite of all the Communist attacks the Russian villages, and not alone the villages, had remained religious. That was true even of a generation who were born and educated after the Revolution.

In the ten different Soviet prisons and the fourteen Soviet camps in which I was confined, I learned that the majority of my fellow prisoners, apart from former Party members and Young Communists, had not lost their faith, although they scarcely ever practiced the ceremonies of religion. And many former Party members who had lost faith in their ideas because they were sent to prison without justice tried to fill the emptiness within them with something else—and that something was God.

During the war high church officials—those who were still alive—were released from their camps in the far north and restored to office. They were by then willing to do anything; the long years in prison could not fail to leave a mark upon their souls. They prayed for the Little Father Stalin as they had formerly prayed for the Emperor. They uttered prayers of thanks to God for His goodness in sending Stalin to the nation, "leader of the people, the genius of the twentieth century, the one who had benefited and freed the Soviet people." The rulers of the Soviet state, with a great show of belief, pinned the Order of the Red Flag to the breasts of these church officials.

But all the lesser people who were rotting in the forced labor camps on account of their religion were

not affected by this return to religion. Not one of them had his term reduced. And they continued to stick to their view that everything done by the Soviets was an act of the *Antichrist*. They were the people who endured the conditions in the camp best and most calmly.

Among them were nuns whose houses had been destroyed thirty years before, but who still felt themselves and called themselves nuns. On all Sundays and church holy days they would go to the cage. No one could force them either by persuading, threatening, mocking, or by physical punishment to work on the Lord's days. They ate their thin punishment food and sang their songs. They were beaten. Their skirts were tied over their heads, and sometimes they were tied together by the hair. It did not help. On the following Sunday they allowed themselves to be pushed into the cage with the same patience and as mild and steady as ever.

There were members of more extreme groups whose religion forbids them even to give their names to the *Antichrist*. Matushka Seizeva was one of these. Every night when she passed through the room of the guard she looked with silent scorn at the commander of the guard, who had to register each prisoner in his book. Other prisoners who knew her quickly called over her shoulder, "Seizeva," and she was allowed to pass. If no one else was there at the time the commander roared once or twice, "Name?" and when he received no answer, Matushka was promptly sent to the camp prison without her supper, to spend the night there.

In many religious groups there were rules against accepting any official legal papers. Contact with any such devices of the Antichrist was sin. Lack of papers was the cause of the arrest and conviction of many members of these groups. After serving their five years they were taken to the camp office to receive their release papers. But they refused to accept them. Without papers no one can live in the Soviet Union. Therefore they were soon brought to trial again, and vanished once more into the camps.

DISHONESTY

All property in the Soviet Union is state property. If there were reasonable satisfactory production and a just distribution of the great wealth of the country, the Soviet Union could provide a good life for its citizens. But the rate of production is miserable because of the unhealthy conditions in which the mass of the people live, and it is not reasonable because the main effort is put upon the production of war goods, which will neither feed nor clothe people. A vast army must be kept; it must have a group of officers who have a high standard of living compared with the rest of the people—though not high compared with the standard of living in free countries—and who do not produce. The troops of the Ministry of the Interior (the NKVD, now MVD), which are used for the silencing of the Soviet people, make up a tremendous system with branches that extend into the smallest villages. This police force is far larger

than that of any other state in the world. All its members enjoy considerable privileges which bring down still further the low level of the working people who have to support this army of people who do not produce. The third group which do not produce and rest on the suffering shoulders of the people is the tremendous number employed by the Soviet administration. This group of officials would be funny if its existence were not so terrible for the people. The most successful kind of industry and agriculture would not permanently support such a weight of members that do not produce. And the Soviet economic system is by no means successful.

Since the masses of the people continue to feel that they are robbed in distributed goods created by them, they try to get back something. This has resulted in the growth of a bad attitude toward state property. Only a good standard of living could persuade the masses to look upon state property as the basis for their own well-being. Since they have no satisfactory living conditions, each is interested only in getting a tiny part of this state property for his own personal use, no matter what the economic consequences upon the country as a whole. Stealing state property on a small or large scale has become an accepted thing.

When a worker's family is freezing in a cold room because there is no wood for sale, he steals wood and coal from the state factory. When no glass is obtainable, the peasant uses the glass intended for the state glass house for young plants to fix his own broken window. When the stores have no material for curtains, the nurse steals medical cloth from the

state hospital and uses it for her own window. What Soviet citizen would consider such actions as crimes? The masses of the people have lost all sense of honesty with regard to state property, just as the representatives of the Soviet state have lost all sense of justice, human feeling, and responsibility toward the laboring masses.

What is true of Soviet life in general is doubly true with regard to the goods intended for prisoners. Everyone who has anything to do with supplies tries to make a profit out of them. In the carpenter shops which are supposed to take care of camp buildings, furniture, and so forth, the officials have their personal furniture made free. Cloth and even wool blankets, which during the war were imported from America for the use of the prisoners, never came to the prisoners. Any lady who had the slightest connection with the camp administration would have her coats made free in the prisoners' tailor shops. For their private benefit camp commanders made free use of prisoners as shoe makers, tailors, painters, skilled workers, fishermen, doctors, and so on. With the aid of prisoners in charge of food supplies and prisoners in charge of accounts all sorts of tricks were practiced. The prisoners had every reason to help. It assured their hold on the comfortable jobs, and they made a little profit besides; the mass of the prisoners in the camp suffered.

After the free citizens had taken the best plums, it was the prisoners' turn. Camp duty is usually assigned to some of the criminal prisoners, whose consciences are not too keen. Thus, in every camp kitchen the

cooks steal without shame or worry for themselves and their particular group. If there are too many protests from the prisoners, the cook is replaced by another thief.

Every few years a high commission comes from Moscow. The commissioners are wrapped in heavy furs to the tips of their noses. They have had several drinks and are surrounded by a multitude of officers of the guard. On such days a few drops of fat are to be seen floating on the surface of the prisoners' soup, and the boiled meal is not quite so watery. The well-fed commissioners, with their fancy uniforms and service ribbons, go through the camp, accompanied by the commander, of course, so that no one will get the idea that he can appeal to the commissioners and make a complaint. As soon as the commission departs everything returns to normal. The few prisoners with courage who nevertheless dared to complain about the terrible conditions in the camp will regret it later. Moscow is far away; the camp commander is near. Nothing has ever been changed after a commission departs. Generously supplied with liquor by the commander during their stay, the visitors ride away in their large black automobiles feeling very pleased with themselves. The prisoners who complained are sent away to the most terrible of the gold mines or to the most remote forest camps, where they lose forever all desire to seek justice in the Soviet Union.

LOVE IN KOLYMA

About eighty to a hundred thousand men prisoners are delivered to Kolyma every year, but only about five hundred women prisoners. The prisoners are not allowed to have any relations with the opposite sex. Their camps are completely separate. The prisoners in the gold mines often do not see a woman, even from a distance, for as long as six or seven years.

Near the large women's camp at Elgen, with almost a thousand prisoners, there is a small men's camp of about eighty prisoners whom the medical commissions have declared unfit for work in the gold mines. These men are employed as skilled laborers and field workers. Thus men and women prisoners meet at their places of work. There have been cases where women criminals attempted to make sex attacks on these sick men.

The average male prisoner at Kolyma has no great sex problem. His whole system is exhausted by the severe physical labor, and his starved body desires only one thing—bread. When a person is exposed to merciless cold all day, his passions freeze. Partly for these reasons and partly also because of the relatively innocent character of Russians, there are no sex problems with the same sex to speak of in the camps. Most women prisoners had never even heard of sex relations between two women. They learned about it for the first time as prisoners; for it is relatively frequent among female criminals.

The problem becomes important for a male prisoner only after he has secured a comfortable post which enables him to fill his stomach. But even if there are women prisoners working in the area, he has little chance to meet them. Women prisoners, if they have the slightest opportunity to have relations with men, choose their partners from among the free citizens. A law does exist which provides up to ten years in prison for Soviet citizens who have sex relations with prisoners, but in Kolyma this law has been forgotten. Free citizens are preferred because they can provide prisoners with food. "Butter, sugar, white bread," is the language the criminals use in place of "I love you." During the war and the years that followed not only criminals, but former honest women, could be bought for a pound of black bread. And the honest men of Kolyma bought the entire supply.

The woman was always the one who suffered for it. If a camp guard reported that he had caught one of the prisoners with a man, she would be given several days in a cell alone and then transported to another camp with the first group going out.

There are thousands of free citizens in Kolyma who have been persuaded or ordered to work there as men of science, engineers, doctors, economic experts, camp administration workers, guards, and so on. Most of the men are without women. Husbands rarely venture to take their wives into this wild country where there is nothing but cold, disease, lonely areas, and liquor. Also, young men not married are usually picked for jobs in Kolyma.

In addition to this higher class of really free citi-

zens there is a low class, former prisoners who have finished their terms and who are by this fact settled in Kolyma. These two groups live quite separately and rarely mix. But all of them are eagerly in search of a woman. No social class limit attaches to women who were former prisoners. Every woman, no matter whether she was a counter-revolutionary or a criminal, is married within a month after her release.

Shortly after the war an appeal went out to Young Communist girls to devote their energies to construction in Kolyma. Attracted by the prospect of going to a region where there are no extra women, as there are in European Russia, several hundred girls decided to go. They were received in Magadan with great honor, dined and provided with the best of clothes. The newspapers spoke highly about these brave girls. Naturally they were "sold out" in no time. But the stories of their brave actions soon could be used only in newspapers outside of Kolyma; in Kolyma itself such stories were a source of laughter, for the girls' principal area of action became only too well known. After their arrival the rate of sex disease went up so sharply that some girls had to be locked up in hospitals by force.

THE STAGES OF TERROR

Fear is the greatest factor in the life of the Soviet Union. The free Soviet citizen is afraid of being put under suspicion by, for example, a thoughtless remark. Political conversations are avoided. The name of Stalin is used only at public meetings; in private life phrases without his name are used so that a passing listener will not get the idea that an unkind remark had been made about Stalin. If the name is mentioned, the form is generally Joseph Vissarionovich.

Prisoners are afraid to discuss politics because such conversations might bring an addition to their terms, or even worse punishment. Reporting secretly on each other occurs often. Order is kept by fear: fear of starving, fear of a reform camp, fear of the camp prison. And released prisoners are even more afraid; they spend every day of their lives in fear of another arrest.

There is a popular joke that the Soviet Union is made up of three classes: prisoners, former prisoners, and future prisoners. That is not so funny; there is scarcely a family in the country which hasn't some relative, whether close or distant, in prison or camp.

No Soviet citizen ever expresses his real thoughts not even to his closest friends or the members of his

immediate family. Children are raised to look upon the Party, not their parents, as their highest model. No one dares to defend a counter-revolutionary prisoner; even to show the slightest sympathy for the unfortunate victim might mean destruction.

It was night when we went out to work. But in that region the endless winter nights are never quite dark because everything is wrapped in blinding white snow. In pairs we marched over the frozen forest road, one of us with the axe hung from the cord around her waist, while the other carried the long narrow saw changing it from her right to her left shoulder, for the hand holding it would freeze painfully inside the stuffed glove.

Our leader was a good-natured Ukranian peasant, a former prisoner himself. He assigned each pair of us in a place in the woods, far enough apart so that the trees we cut would not come crashing down upon another couple. First of all we began to look for dry wood. Carefully, because matches were precious, I would light the little pile of small silver branches we had assembled on the snow, until the friendly flame rose up. We fed it with larger and larger branches, and finally with big dry tree trunks. Then we rolled a large log up to the fire, sat down on it and stretched our legs out to the warm fire while we waited for dawn. In a circle around the fire the snow melted; the fire itself sank deeper and deeper into the hollow it created, until our legs were hanging over a bit of bare forest earth. Now it was time. We placed two fresh logs across the fire to keep it going and marched

through the breast-high snow to the first of the six trees we had to cut. I and my partner, a peasant girl from the Volga region had to deliver six cubic yards of wood a day. With our hands and feet we cleared a firm place to stand in the snow and used the axe to make a cut a few inches deep in the side of the thirty-foot tree. Then we started sawing from the other side. Now and then we glanced up at the trunk which rose straight into the air. With our left knee on the snow, our left arm firmly against the trunk of the tree, our right arms pulled and pushed the saw at an even pace. When our arms grew tired we let them hang for a moment, breathing heavily, without changing our position. The saw ate through the trunk until louder and louder cracking noises announced the coming fall of the tree. Looking up, ready to jump, we drew the saw back and forth a few more times, then pulled it out and threw ourselves on our side into the snow. A last crack, and the tree crashed to the ground. Then we crawled out into the deep snow again to remove all the limbs from the tree. Four or five cuts divided it into six-foot pieces, and then we went to work on the next tree. When the sixth tree lay on the ground, we turned back to our fire, which had meanwhile burned down to glowing coals. We fed it again, took hard-frozen pieces of bread from our pockets and stuck them on sticks so that we could warm them over the fire. The last rays of the ice-cold winter sun faded away in the sky. With our feet we made a path through the snow to a place where the snow transport could come in, loaded

the logs on our shoulders, and struggled with them to make a pile of wood.

Then we sat silently side by side at the fire. At last the leader would appear silently beside us on his snow shoes and call out a loud, friendly, "Home, girls," as he measured our pile of wood. "Home," we would repeat bitterly as we marched back to camp with the others.

THE CAMP PRISON

The cage, a kind of tiny prison, is an absolute essential of every camp. It is usually without windows, without light, and without heat or else very poorly heated. Frozen toes among the prisoners are frequently due to a stay in the camp prison. It contains a large common cell and a few tiny single cells, the usual boards and the usual bed insects and body insects. The daily portion in the camp prison is ten and a half ounces of bread and a warm soup. The camp commanders hand out terms in the camp prison of from one to ten days for a great variety of reasons; only in very severe cases is the term for twenty days. You can be condemned to the camp prison with or without a permit to work; the latter type is the worse punishment. If the prisoner is let out to work he can usually manage to get a little more food than he is allowed, and above all, by moving around at work he can warm up more easily than he can in the prison.

In a camp with several hundred prisoners, not a day passes without some being sent to the camp

prison. At one time or another every prisoner receives a term in the camp prison.

My fate caught up with me in the potato fields. It was planting time. The potatoes had been held over the winter in boxes, between coats of dry, soft earth, and were now beginning to grow. We worked in pairs planting them. Now and then we would pause and quickly eat one or two potatoes raw. They tasted bitter and scratched the throat, but they made us feel that we had something in our stomachs. Besides, raw potatoes were good against disease and all of us had bleeding mouths and loose teeth. At my partner's suggestion I quickly stuffed five small potatoes into the arm of my coat. When I raised up I saw standing before me the administration chief. Even if he had not noticed me pick up the potatoes, my scared face would have made him suspicious. He said nothing, but I heard his heavy military boots stepping along behind me. My partner reached the new work place first and tossed her coat to the ground. I threw mine beside it. I heard a voice at my side ask, "What have you got in that coat?" "Potatoes," I said.

"Throw them out." My five miserable little potatoes rolled to the ground. Then he began to rage. For about twenty minutes he screamed with skill all the curses you could imagine and those you could not imagine. He would show me. I would remember him.

He kept his word. I remembered him.

During the next few days nothing happened. Then a helping unit from the main Elgen camp came out

to our border camp. With this group was my friend J. W.

"Have you been in the camp prison?" she asked me very excited.

"If? Why? Not at all." But I felt a sinking feeling.

"It was announced at evening roll call that that you'd been given three days in prison for stealing potatoes."

Camp prison sentences for all prisoners were read out in the main camp as well as in the border camps. The commander of our border camp, a young Russian who tried not to make our lives harder than they already were, knew I was a good worker, and he was aware because of the evening searches that I had never attempted to bring in secret so much as a potato into the camp, although this was generally done by the prisoners. And so he had played the part of an angel; since he didn't want me sitting in the camp prison he had not read the sentence at roll call.

I breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that the potato affair was over and finished.

It was not.

It was the last day of planting. Group leaders, guards, agriculture experts, and camp commanders moved constantly around us to urge us on to a last burst of effort. Stumbling with weariness, we returned to camp in the evening.

I was just going to sleep when the group attendant came into the dim barrack with a list of names. I started up in fright as my name was suddenly called.

I packed my bed sack and went out to join a group dressed in impossible rags, who greeted me with loud

cries and the surprising, pleasing question, "What is the 'rose' doing with us?" The rose did silently swing her sack to her shoulder. With a sad heart I answered the calls of, "Don't worry about it," from my friends who were staying behind, and for a second I saw the kindly commander looking at me. Then he turned us over to the guards who were to take us the three miles back to the main camp. The guards had dogs, which meant that this was a punishment group. On the way we met the administration chief, whose pale gray eyes glowed with satisfaction when he saw me in the company. I answered with a look of hate.

The commander of the main camp took the list with our names and ordered, "Put the whole pack into the punishment barrack."

The barrack was low, dark, and crawling with bed insects. The criminal prisoners made it quite clear I had no business there. Some of them were sex problems; they lay on the boards, couples sharing one blanket, their faces gray, dark circles under their eyes, and watched with evil smiles as I tried to find a place. Wherever I put down my bed sack someone said, "This place is taken. These boards are broken. Keep out of here. Get going."

They might have stripped me and taken away all my things, down to the last foot-rag; I would have been completely without help and they knew it. That was the usual process when a lone counter-revolutionary fell into the hands of criminals. But they did not do it. They merely made it quite clear to me that I had better get out of here fast. The reason they did not touch me was that I was after all a foreigner.

Toward foreigners Russians feel a certain respect, and this feeling comes out quite clearly in the more simple and unspoiled of the people.

The barrack was not yet locked, and I rushed out to find shelter, in the "German" barrack, which was after all also a barrack of the lowest class of prisoners. I cried out to the camp attendant. "Do what you like with me, but you won't get me back into the punishment barrack unless you carry me in." Apparently my despair impressed her, for such conduct was not usual with me. She quietly allowed me to stay and nothing more was said about the punishment barrack.

Next morning, however, I was called out to work as a member of the punishment group. Our place of work was five miles from the camp.

After a march of about two hours we reached the swamps where we were to work. Clouds of insects instantly fell upon us with eager noises. We could protect our faces against them with the head cloth, but not our arms, legs, and the backs of our necks. I often wondered what they lived on before prisoners were brought in to feed them.

In July the thin swamp grass is cut. We were supposed to cut out whatever bushes might interfere with the cutting blades and throw them into the pools of water. It was useless work which had been thought up specially for the punishment group. Lighting smoke fires to drive away the insects was absolutely not allowed. It was impossible to eat so much as a piece of bread throughout the day, for the moment you lifted the cloth over your face a multitude of insects settled on it. The constant stinging and pain of

insect bites drove you crazy after a short time, but what good was it to run around in a circle like a mad dog—you could not break through the line of guards.

The hours crawled by. The day stretched out endlessly. Had the earth forgotten to turn? Would the sun remain forever in the same spot? The insects bit, stung, crawled, hurt, and burned. No slow darkening in the sky promised the coming of night; the one feature that marked the approach of evening was that the noise of the insects became louder and more threatening. Bright days, ghostly bright nights. Days filled with insects, nights with bed insects.

At first I opposed the thought of begging the camp commander for another job. She might sometimes grant it if you pitifully crawled and confessed your sins to her. I was resolved not to do that. But after several weeks in the swamp I was desperate, and went to her.

Behind the desk sat Valentina Mikhailovna Zimmermann, known as "the Fish." I stood looking at the narrow, set face with its hard smile, male features, the ugly mouth and the finely shaped forehead under smooth dark hair, the trim body in the neat, well-fitting uniform.

"What do you wish?" she asked with cold correctness.

I made request for transfer to another work group.

"Where are you working?" She knew perfectly well, since she herself had put me in the punishment group.

"Clearing the meadows," I answered.

"Oh. Then there's nothing I can do. The other groups are already full."

"How long must I suffer over a few miserable potatoes?"

"You might have thought of that before you stole them."

I turned and left the office.

Nevertheless, after another week she transferred me from the swamps to another work group.

Afterwards, whenever anyone mentioned the word "potatoes" in my presence, I felt sick.

THE LIFE OF SLAVES

MONEY

When he is first arrested a prisoner is relieved of all the money he has with him. He is given a written note for it, which he can use to buy food and tobacco twice a month from the prison store, to the amount of fifty rubles a month. If his relatives find out what prison he is in—a matter of considerable difficulty—they are permitted to send him fifty rubles a month. Food and clothing packages are not accepted in the large city prisons; the smaller prisons in the provinces are not so severe in this matter. While he is on the way, which may be for a month or two, he is without any money. And he is also without money so long as he remains in a transfer camp, like that at Vladivostok, which may be for half a year or more.

When he reaches the labor camp he can report to the camp's economic department the amount of money he left behind in the prison of his arrest. Usually it takes more than a year before the rest of his money is transferred from the prison to the camp. In camp too the money is not paid out to him, but a personal account is set up for him. From this account he may draw fifty rubles a month in cash, which he may use as he pleases.

The camp, that is, the NKVD, hires the prisoners out to work in all sorts of state enterprises. In Kolyma, where there is no native population except for the villages of the backward Yakuts, the entire economic system is based upon prison labor. Prisoners are employed in every sort of work throughout Kolyma. For each prisoner workman the business pays a fixed sum to the camp. There is a definite amount of work which each prisoner is required to perform.

A prisoner working in the woods must cut down, saw, and pile three, four and a half, or six cubic *meters* of wood, according to the thickness of the forest.

If he works in the gold mines, he must obtain an average of 0.7 ounces of pure gold a day, or deliver enough carts full of material from the mine to the porcessing machinery to yield 0.7 ounces of pure gold.

A prisoner working as a doctor in the hospital must treat a room of at least fifty seriously ill patients. Each prisoner who works as a nurse is in charge of a fixed number of patients.

In principle prisoners at Camp Elgen were allowed

to receive packages from relatives. In practice such packages arrived very seldom, and this was true of letters. Anyone who received news from home as much as once or twice a year considered himself fortunate. Many never succeeded in restoring connections with their families, especially when a father and mother had both been arrested and the children placed in a state children's home.

All letters of the prisoners were subject to examination. Prisoners were not allowed to write about living, working, or food conditions, nor to say anything about other prisoners. The name of the camp also could not be mentioned. All the mail went through box numbers—for example, Magadan, Box No. 522—although in reality the camp might be four or five hundred miles from the port of Magadan. Half of the letters were not sent off because those who made the examinations of the mail were none too good at reading, and were too lazy to read through them all. The letters which were sent out had to pass the military examination of Kolyma, which checked on all letters, even those of free citizens. There, half of the remaining letters vanished, again because of the poor quality of the censors. Some of those that passed the examinations reached their addresses, some did not. The Soviet Union is large, and the mail system is impossibly weak and careless. (No letters at all could be sent abroad. Nor was there any other way to send information abroad, since every letter to a foreign country by a Soviet citizen is subject to special examination in time of peace as well as in time of war.)

As soon as anyone receives a package the entire camp knows about it, and the lucky fellow is flooded with comments of good wishes—each well-wisher secretly hoping that he will be offered at least some tobacco, if not something to eat. Even when the package is only food, the receiver sadly remarks that all he got were a few warm things to wear—the object being to discourage his friends' hopes from the start. They don't believe him, of course; they recognize such remarks as a nice refusal.

Late at night they hear the tearing of paper from the lucky bird's bed, and the forgotten smell of meat is raised through the barrack. Everyone smells it, everyone's mouth waters; sighing, the others draw their blankets over their heads.

CAMP PORTIONS

It is impossible to live on the camp food portion for prisoners, for more than two years, at any rate. By the third year whoever tries it is a physical wreck; by the fourth he is not able to work; and by the fifth year he is buried in the dust, or more often the snow.

Daily Bread Portion for Prisoners in Kilyma

<i>Labor Per cent of Portion</i>	<i>Women</i> ounces	<i>Men</i> ounces
100% or better	21.0	28.12
70% to 99%	17.5	25.0
50% to 69%	14.0	17.5
Punishment portion	10.5	10.5

The higher bread ration for men applies to miners. As soon as a male prisoner is sent to lighter work in the woods or on construction, he receives the small women's ration.

For all prisoners, per day: 3.5 ounces of salt fish; 2.1 ounces of grain—oats and others—0.17 ounces of flour or grain meal; 0.5 ounce of vegetable oil; 0.34 ounce of sugar; 0.106 ounce of tea; 10.5 ounces of cabbage leaves in salt water:

Food for Prisoners

Breakfast: Half a herring or 1.75 ounces of salt fish; sweet tea; one-third of the bread allowance.

Lunch: Cabbage leaf soup, eight ounces. Crushed grain. One-third of the bread allowance.

Supper: Cabbage leaf soup, with a small amount of some grain and boiled-down fish-heads floating in it. One-third of the bread allowance.

Year in and year out, on days of the week and on holidays, the food is the same. Its lack of variety alone, aside from its lack of *vitamin C*, tends to bring on disease. To fight the disease the prisoners are given a glass of medicine in the camp dining rooms. If you don't drink your glass of medicine, you don't receive a wood spoon for eating. This medicine is made from pine; it is an extremely bitter drink, but it has actually proved to be effective against a disease caused by lack of *vitamin C* and is manufactured in the local vitamin factory of Taskan, on the Taskan River, a branch of the Kolyma.

The lack of vitamin B has resulted in mass cases of another disease caused by lack of food. A prisoner with a serious case of this disease must give up 1.75 ounces of his bread ration and is given instead a mixture made of flour and bread ferment, which is supposed to restore the missing vitamin B.

In spite of these measures, one of the most frequent description of the cause of death in prisoners is lack of vitamins. Another frequent cause of death is starvation.

In judging the prison food portions it must be kept in mind that these portions are for people who perform the heaviest kind of physical labor twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day in a country which during the eight months of winter has the lowest temperatures of any country where people live on the face of the earth.

BREAD

Misha was a young man of about twenty. He had kept his courage up through prison, camps, and gold mines. And he had had the devil's own luck; he contracted a disease of the chest which brought him into the hospital. The hospital was the dream of all prisoners. With his strong young body, he had conquered the disease, while most of his fellows on beds near him had escaped to a better world with half a dozen or more years still owed to the state.

In order to make sure God knew with whom He was dealing when these deserters reached Heaven,

a card made of wood was tied to one of their big toes, reading: Prisoner X, born . . . died . . . doctor's report . . . law section . . . term . . ."

Now, after all the sharp pain, the tortured coughing and the fever dreams, Misha could think of only one thing—his hunger without limit.

Everybody in the camp loved him, loved the trace of recent childhood that still remained in his thin, boyish face, in spite of years in prison. But no one could help him, because all were sick with hunger; all could think of only one thing: more bread, a little more bread.

After his recovery he was sent to "light" work—wood chopping. One day he could stand his hunger no longer. None of the guards was in sight. He took a supply of firewood which he had cut secretly, loaded it on his back and marched off. The village of free citizens was several miles away, and he had to hurry in order to get back to his place in the woods in time for the return to camp.

A good-natured housewife paid him for the wood with a warm meal, which he quickly swallowed on the spot, and gave him some white bread to take with him on the way.

The brief winter sun was already sinking behind the red-stained hills or snow. Tonight he would eat his fill for once. He did not know that he had already been missed. And he was hurrying so that he did not notice the guard ahead of him. When the soldier raised his rifle, Misha failed to see him. And when he heard the heavy cry, "Halt," he was so surprised that he stumbled on a few steps. The soldier fired.

That evening the prisoners carried the body of their young friend into camp.

The soldier made his report to the camp commander: shot while trying to escape. The commander nodded. Nothing out of the ordinary. After the soldier had closed the door behind him, the commander read the dead boy's name again. Apparently he must suddenly have remembered that bright face of the young boy.

In spite of the poor light, he saw that the boy had been shot in the chest. From the front, not from behind.

Someone raised the oil lamp. He suddenly saw the blood covered mass of bread coming out of the boy's coat.

"What is that?" he whispered.

"That is what he died for, Citizen Commander. A piece of bread."

THE DAY IN ELGEN

In summer the day in Elgen begins at five o'clock, in winter at five-thirty. An iron rod is beaten several times against a hanging length of iron rail, the kind of rail the carts in the gold mines run on.

At the sound the uniformed women guards are at the side of our beds, pulling the blankets away from us. "Come on, come on, get up, faster, faster." It is better to choke back the angry words that are on the tip of your tongue and get yourself into your long,

cold and damp, stuffed pants, whose original black is by now sprinkled with a multitude of patches in various colors. Then you rush into the room for washing where the battle for the foot-rags is already in full swing and where you can curse as hard as you like.

Then we line up in front of the barracks in rows of five, each of us armed with her drinking cup and food ticket. When all are together at last and our feet have frozen to their usual low temperature, the guard gives the order to march. She leads us in close order to the dining room. There some seventy of us line up in front of the table for our bread.

The bread is distributed by a gray-haired old sick woman with sharp eyes, a sharp tongue, a thin sharp nose, and thin sharp fingers. In front of her lies a book, like the commander of the guard's book, listing the names of all the prisoners by groups. You give her your name and she begins looking through the pages while seventy women wait. She pushes back her glasses, stares at you to make sure you really are the person you claim to be, sets her glasses back on her nose, and hands you the ready-cut seven ounces of bread. It is a middle section, of course; not everybody can have an end of bread. Ends are for her special friends; she cannot have everyone as a friend. It is impossible to explain to someone who has not been in camp or prison what the end piece of bread means. The end is firmer, it looks more attractive and it seems to be heavier. But more than that, an end seems to fill you more than the middle section of the bread, although it too weighs only seven ounces.

After the bread is taken care of, the same line forms at the next table—except that the line has now grown longer by the addition of groups from other barracks. Our breakfast food ticket is torn off and our drinking cups are filled with a slightly sweet, slightly colored, moderately warm liquid, which is supposed to contain the third of an ounce of sugar we are allowed every day. Then half a herring is dropped down on the table. Good Lord, are these herrings all head? What has happened to the tail ends? Of course you really know. The cooks have their favorites too, and they can't have everyone for a favorite. The tail end of a herring is almost all food, except for a tiny portion, while the head amounts to the same in weight, even though so little of it can be eaten.

As the rules require, we eat our breakfast in the cold dining room, crowded together on a bench at a more or less clean wooden table. Then, encouraged by our abundant meal, we rush back to the barrack, finish dressing, perform the sacred duty of putting our beds in order, find some excuse for arguing with one of our neighbors, and then the ringing rail signals that it is time to leave for work.

Once again we line up in rows of five in front of the barrack, and after the usual wait the guard leads us to the square in front of the gate. There are six or seven hundred women waiting to go out. Every group is guarded by at least two male soldiers. The soldiers are not here yet, so the prisoners wait. As yet only the trusted prisoner who is responsible for the distribution of work is on the spot. She is one of the prisoners with most influence in the camp, for she makes

up the lists of the various labor groups, although of course she is beneath her free superior, the chief of labor distribution. Unlike her superior, she knows every prisoner in the camp, and a small remark of hers at the right time very frequently determines where a prisoner will be sent to work. She can make requests for transfer of workers, and since most free camp leaders are evidently very lazy and careless, these requests are as a rule adopted without question. This applies also to proposed transfers to other and more remote camps. Naturally the naryaditsya offers her suggestions on the basis of her personal opinions. To make sure that these personal opinions are good, and in the hope of getting or keeping a better job, the prisoners without shame shower presents and flattery upon her.

Searches are an important part of life both in prisons and camps. Female prisoners may be searched only by women. Since there are usually not enough women guards in the camps, the camp administration also uses prisoners who are in turn checked upon by soldiers of the guard. There is a search every time the prisoners enter the camp again, that is, once or twice a day. In addition, at least every two months there is a thorough search of the barrack and of all the things the prisoners possess. This operation is always carried out in the middle of the night and usually lasts several hours.

Searchings are particularly hard before and during the state holidays on May 1 and November 7; apparently the administration then fears some trouble on the part of the prisoners, although the idea of

trouble on these or any other days never even enters the prisoners' heads.

Ordinarily the guards turn up scarcely anything in the course of these searches: writing paper, pencils, cotton bags, hand made sewing needles, secretly obtained food which may have been bought with great trouble and danger from the earnings of two or three months, and money over fifty rubles. What we hated worse than the rude guards, worse than their taking away the little things we needed, worse than the shame of the whole process, was the fact that we were robbed of our all-too-brief night's sleep. For all through the years in camp we suffered from continued lack of rest.

To get back to our departure for work. Sometimes it was directed by the camp commander or the chief of labor distribution herself; in this case a few prison terms would certainly be given for talking, smoking, or being late. Wrapped in warm furs and soft boots, these well-fed officials performed this heavy duty a few times every month. They do not know the individual prisoners and do not want to know them. They know only that there are a certain number of prisoners who have to work until they drop. If they drop there will be others to replace them, and these others will be equally unknown, except as numbers. Prisoners who drop go to the hospital. Then it is the medical section's business either to send them back into the gray mass of the camp, once more fit for work, or to write them off in File No. 3 (the death file). The camp commander has not made the camp

or the prisoners; the soup was cooked by the NKVD and she only adds the flavor.

The big wood gate is thrown open. The soldiers line up on both sides. The naryaditsya with her list and the commander of the guard with his register are also there. The first group of field workers is called. They go forward a few steps. Then each member of the group, called by name, replies loudly giving her name, and goes out through the gate to the road, where the group is again lined up by fives. As they go out the commander of the guard counts the number in the group, say forty prisoners. When all forty are outside in eight rows of five, the guards count them once or twice more. Then one of the guards goes back to the commander and signs for receiving forty prisoners. Then the first field group marches off. The other six hundred women wait, poorly clothed in summer and winter. The prisoners must perform outside work until the temperature reaches fifty degrees below zero centigrade (-58° F.) According to the official medical reports, most of the cases of frozen feet, fingers, ears and so on among prisoners do not occur during work, but in waiting to leave and to enter camp. Although we have been up since five o'clock, the work day is counted as starting at seven o'clock. We work from seven o'clock until twelve; then there is an hour's rest at noon, and we work again from one until eight.

The first group of field workers receives the order, "Forward, march," and starts off. Since all the prisoners are frozen from standing still, they try to warm up by marching quickly. But all of them cannot keep

up the pace. The average age of the criminals is about thirty, while the average age of the counter-revolutionaries is forty or more. The older women get behind; the spaces between the rows of five become uneven. But that is not allowed. The guards shout like thunder, "Halt," and again we stand freezing, shifting our weight from one foot to the other. "Don't string out," we are ordered, and again we start on our way. But the younger women begin cursing furiously at the breathless, gasping older women. Talking during the march to work is not allowed.

When we reach the field we are given over to the labor leader, a free citizen, who assigns each prisoner her work.

In the fields of the Elgen state farm, cabbage is the principal crop. The cabbage seed is planted in the warm glass houses. Then each young plant is transferred to a small pot made of a mixture of good earth and cow droppings. The pots are placed in the warm beds where they remain until planting time, usually May 28; by then the plants are four to six inches tall. When being set, the plants are put into the ground inside their fertilized pots, the bottoms of which have been cut off so that the roots can develop more freely.

Against the various harmful insects, such as cabbage worms, Paris green, a solution of an insect killer and soap, and a treatment with a strong chemical solution are used. The plants are fed with as much cow droppings as is available, and with *nitrates*. The earth around the small plants is made loose and piled up by hand with a small, sharp *hoe*. The second and

third times a special plow is used to cultivate the fields.

The hardest part of the job is watering, which is done by women prisoners who carry water cans all over the huge fields. The harvesting is done in September, when the land is already covered with snow. The cabbage heads are knocked off their short stems with shovels.

In winter the prisoners cut the decayed vegetable matter, which is used along with cow and horse droppings to prepare the soil. They also make the pots and do the planting, which must not take more than two weeks. Soaked by rain and eaten by insects, they tend the cabbage; then, with hands and feet almost frozen by cold, they harvest it. In return they receive the large, bitter dark-green outside leaves.

And in spite of all that they say: "This is my field." Or: "See how fine my cabbage is."

The guards are interested only in seeing that no one leaves the field, or that no person without a permit has a little talk with the guard, and if a bottle of highly-prized liquor changes hands, then the guard fails to notice anything when the person without a permit picks out a woman for himself and disappears with her for half an hour.

For the rest the group leader is our lord and master. The group leader takes care that the labor force placed at his command produces a definite amount of work, for which he is responsible to the agriculture expert. The labor force is always determined very closely so that in order to meet his required amount the group leader must drive the prisoners to the high-

est possible production. A kind group leader will overlook his workers' "pause for a smoke," in which those not smoking take part, of course. It is still called a pause for a smoke even when, not happily, nobody has any tobacco—a state of affairs that often lasts for months. When after five or ten minutes such a group leader "happens" by, everybody knows that it is now time to get back to work.

Of all the prisoners' work, digging ditches is the most dreaded. Even rough, hard Russian women do not have the strength to dig up nine cubic yards of earth in a day. That is the normal amount for prisoners, and it does not matter whether the prisoner is a man or a woman; prisoners have no sex. But no woman can meet this amount. And so, when the women toss their noisy shovels into a pile in the evening, they know they have not earned their seventeen and a half ounces of bread. They walk wearily back to camp with aching backs, lie down on beds whose hardness they no longer feel, and as they fall asleep they think, "I won't get up tomorrow no matter what they do to me. I can't do it. This is the end."

But in the morning when the iron rod rings against the rail, they start up out of bed and do all the things a prisoner must do.

They take the hated shovels in their hands and dig and dig. There are two hundred acres of fields at Elgen, and these required many long ditches. One morning the free leader came by, looked on for a while, cursed between his teeth and went away. A few hours later he came back to check the work, and this time he cursed loud enough for the guards to hear

him. But while he was naming the devil and the devil's grandmother and sparing neither the Mother of God nor all the families of all prisoners and ditch-digging prisoners in particular, his eyes rested on one small woman who held a shovel far too large for her. Tears and drops of *sweat* mingled on her face and fell into the ditch, but she did not take the time to wipe them away. The group leader's eyes were sad as he walked away over the fields.

He was not an NKVD man, nor a member of the guard, and he had no connection with the administration. He was a farmer who had been hired, tempted by the higher wages possible in this remote region. He had heard, of course, that Kolyma was prison territory. But after all, Siberia itself is prison territory, and Kazakhstan and Karaganda and the Urals and Arkhangelsk and Murmansk. There are prison territories everywhere in the Soviet Union. In those other areas, however, there is little contact between prisoners and the civil population. In Kolyma you could not escape the prisoners. He had not known that every free citizen who takes a job in Kolyma, no matter what his trade, must share in sweating the prisoners. He had not realized that the free citizens of Kolyma were there to drive tortured, thin, dead-tired prisoners to their work.

He earned more money than he could have in his home village, but it gave him no pleasure. Although he had come only with the intention of saving he began drinking his money away without sense. There was no meaning to saving and in Kolyma everyone drank—not only because of the bitter weather. In

Russia everyone drinks too much, but in Kolyma all drank without measure. It was as if they had to drown something inside them with huge quantities of liquor. Nobody spoke about it, and everybody drank. And no matter to whose honor they drank, they never honored the NKVD—in spite of the extra rubles they earned here in Kolyma.

When the group leader came back at night to measure the day's work, the women were all sitting in a circle around a fire. It was too dark for them to dig any more, but until the required number of hours were up the guards were not allowed to take the groups back to camp.

The group leader sat down with them. "Tired, girls?" he said. This time he did not curse them because there were no guards near by. He rolled some tobacco, and half a dozen eyes looked earnestly at his tobacco can. "Here, have a smoke." Hungrily, their hands reached out. A weary voice asked, "Ivan Alexandrovitch, how are our percents of work?"

They knew they had not completed their required amount. He knew it too. He knew it was impossible for them ever to do it.

Three times a month he had to turn in production figures, on the basis of which the prisoners received their camp bread card. Three times a month he sweated over those figures.

He growled something without sense and disappeared into the dark, for the guards were coming to line the women up by fives for the march back to camp. But the very sound of his voice gave them hope. He would not leave them in trouble this time

either, for he was a good group leader and a good man. Kolyma had not yet entirely killed his pity.

For months without end the women wore themselves out digging ditches. Then one day a steam shovel was brought in which could dig in a few weeks more than the women had been able to do in year.

The twentieth century is the century of engineering progress as well as of shedding human blood. When will this progress reach Kolyma and relieve the women prisoners who draw heavily loaded transports with the traces across their own chests, as once the Volga boatmen drew the river boats; who cut trees in the forest and carry them out on their own shoulders, no matter how many times their knees give way under the weight? How many snow-shovelers must go blind every year because there are no snow-glasses?

MOTIVES

If a prisoner does not meet his labor requirement 100 per cent, he cannot keep body and soul together very long. Therefore it is to his own interest to use every ounce of his available strength to earn his daily twenty-one (for women) or twenty-eight and a half (for men) ounces of bread.

The managers of Dalstroï, the trust in charge of making Kolyma produce, are interested in filling the plan by more than 100 per cent. In the first place, they will thereby serve the state; in the second place,

they earn ribbons; and in third place, the state then showers the top rulers of Kolyma with annual extra pay amounting to fifty and a hundred thousand rubles each. Moreover, they like the sound of the title "hero of labor."

They count first of all upon the prisoners' hunger. A prisoner who does 110 per cent or better of his amount of work is allowed to buy at the camp store three times a month.

Every summer, when the gold season fever grips Kolyma, meetings are held after work and the prisoners are informed that the administration is considering rewarding all prisoners with good work records by allowing them to live in a colony. For example, if a prisoner still has three years to serve, he can live in a colony for six years instead. The hours and places of work of the colony people scarcely differed from those of the prisoners, but they earned more and lived outside the camp. Otherwise they were completely under authority of the NKVD and could be locked up in camp again at any time. Such a type of colony actually existed during the early years of construction in Kolyma, but in 1937 all the colony people were sent back into the camps. Since then the word colony has been used only as a spur; it is brought out of retirement every summer in order to spur new and believing prisoners to greater efforts. The older prisoners merely listen to the promises of going to a colony with a knowing smile.

There was another trick called "early release." Of the more than one hundred thousand prisoners, two

hundred were picked out and released shortly before their term was up. The list of the names of these people, who were called two-hundred percenters were posted in the dining rooms of all the camps. On closer examination you discovered to your surprise that a prisoner who had worked as a house maid for some NKVD chief was listed as a two-hundred percenter in cutting woods, for which worthy accomplishment she was being released before conclusion of her term. Most of these people were criminals who had distinguished themselves in the service of the camp authorities by being especially cruel toward their fellow prisoners, and who were falsely listed as miners.

Such lists produced few results.

The prisoners were all weary and needed rest. And so, in March and April, before the beginning of the gold season, the OP was set up. These are the Russian first letters of "health center." A select group of prisoners was put into the best barrack in the camp for two or three weeks. They were freed from work, except for a few hours of snow-shoveling or sawing wood. They received two portions of grain meal a day instead of one, and an additional seven ounces of bread.

The group selected for OP was determined by the doctor and the commander together, but the commander had the deciding word in each case. The doctor chose the weakest and most run-down prisoners, while the camp commander preferred to reward the prisoner leaders and the workers with the highest labor per cents—in other words, the

healthiest and strongest prisoners. A few of the more sickly prisoners were sent into OP, while the main body consisted of the healthy bulls who would now be given an opportunity to gather strength before they started their difficult job—of driving on their comrades in misery.

The results of the labor competitions were posted on large boards for notices in the camp yard. Twice a year the prisoners were assembled in the club room at the end of the day and the administration publicly thanked the leaders and groups with the highest labor per cents.

For a high average production, a special pass was given out. The good workers who possess this pass can lose it again for breaking any of the rules which resulted in a camp prison sentence. The pass permitted them to buy tobacco at times when there was not enough to go around, and holders of the pass were given better treatment at the annual renewal of equipment.

Signing up for the war loans was handled in a fashion similar to the labor competitions. First there was an appeal to the prisoners' national pride. Then it was explained that only counter-revolutionaries that could not be corrected would fail to make their contributions. But of course contributions were not forced.

Then a prisoner from the economic department came to the barrack with a list. The list contained the name of each prisoner and, in a column next to it, the amount of money she had in her personal account. Contributions had to be twenty-five rubles

or more. The commander or the administration chief leaned doing nothing and apparently not concerned against a column while the freely given contributions were taken. At last it seemed finished.

The commander looked over his shoulder at the bookkeeper. A few women hard to persuade had crawled into their beds and were pretending to be asleep. Loudly the commander called out the names of those not contributing. Guilty and afraid, they pushed past him to the table where the bookkeeper sat with her list. "Only if you want to, of course; it's all your free will," the commander said with a cold, cruel look in his eyes.

Tobacco is also used as an spur to make prisoners work. The prisoners are almost all mad for tobacco. In theory every smoker who delivers 110 per cent of his required work can buy three and a half ounces of tobacco a month. But in practice sufficient quantities of tobacco are available only in the gold-mine camps.

REQUEST

It was the time of the morning departure from the camp to the gold mines. Several thousand men stood in rows of five and waited. The camp commander with his various helpers stood watching to see that every man who could stand on his feet was moved on his way through the gate.

Someone moved away from the gray army and went up to the commander.

"Citizen Commander, may I be permitted to give you a request?"

The commander nodded. The man took a sheet of paper out of his ragged coat and placed it in the commander's fur glove. Sad, hopeless, hungry eyes watched the commander's expression as he read.

The commander read through the request and instantly roared to the commander of the guard: "Here, ten days in the camp prison without work for this fellow."

That meant ten days at ten and a half ounces of bread and a bowl of soup, ten days in a cold dark cell on bare boards, without a blanket, while the autumn winds drove snow through the board walls. Ten days of fighting the cold, of fingers and toes aching until they could feel no more until turning over and stamping up and down no longer helped, and the exhausted, frightened pile of rags in the corner shook only now and then in the cold.

But those eyes had hoped for nothing—were no longer capable of fear.

Five days later the man was called out to the camp commander. He stood at the desk of the man who was lord and master over three thousand prisoners.

"Now tell me, you son of a dog, what do you mean by writing such a request? You want me to transfer you to the rank of a horse! What do you mean by that?"

"It's very simple to explain, Citizen Commander. If I were a horse, I would have at least one day off in every ten.

"If I were a horse I could rest now and then while at work. As a prisoner I cannot.

"If I were a horse, I would be given work equal to my strength. As a prisoner I am always hungry, and when I do not meet my required amount of labor I get less bread, so that I do still less work, and in the end I get so little bread that I can hardly stand on my feet.

"A horse has his stable and his blanket—I haven't had a new coat for two years because my per cents are too low.

"If drivers beat a horse too hard, or drive him too much, they are punished. But who punishes the guards and group leaders who beat and kick me?

"What is a prisoner in Kolyma? Nothing. But a horse—a horse is something!"

"Back to the prison! Take him away! To the prison!"

The commander sat alone at his desk. Without wanting he read again: "I request transfer to the rank of a horse." And underneath his answer: "Ten days in the camp prison. By order of the commander."

Suddenly he wrote in large letters across the request:

"Economic Department. Issue to prisoner: One stuffed coat (new). Food class I (highest) for one month. October 5, 1944. By order of the commander."

SICKNESS, SELF INJURY, SELF DESTRUCTION

CAMP MEDICAL ORGANIZATION

During our first few days in our first labor camp at Magadan, the group of newly arrived with whom I had come were assigned to digging and cleaning up in the camp yard. It was early June, but the stuffed coats that made us look like packages without shape were very welcome. As soon as we had dug a few shovelfuls of earth, we struck ice.

In the meantime our record had been checked and all the women who had had any medical training, whether as nurses or medical students, were assembled in a square in front of the city hospital.

We were the first counter-revolutionaries, aside from doctors, who were being admitted to medical work—as older prisoners told us with surprise and envy. It was not that the rules had been eased in any way. But the lack of medical help in the face of the constant increase in the number of prisoners was so great that there was nothing else to do.

Every camp has its health center and its small hospital of several beds. Distant branch camps are visited once or twice a month by a medical attendant who wraps wounds, distributes medicine, and excuses sick prisoners from work if they have fever. Severe cases he transfers to the hospital in the main camp.

In the health center and hospital a prisoner doctor

usually does all in his power to give the sick the care they need. It is not his fault that the most essential medicines are not available, nor that the amount of food for the sick is entirely too little.

Especially severe cases are transferred to the large prisoners' hospitals. The largest of these is the Central Hospital of the USVITL on the left side of the Kolyma River, where a large bridge on the road to the northwest crosses the river.

The hospital has about a thousand beds. It is divided into all the special departments of any great hospital, and there are prisoner doctors to staff those departments.

The working heads of the departments are prisoners, who are in general under a free department chief. Medical attendants, nurses, and helpers are prisoners.

This hospital is generally well provided with all types of medicines and medical supplies. Modern methods such as X-ray treatment and air pockets in the chest to rest the lungs are also used. But all these measures are of no use because the principal evil cannot be remedied—the permanent lack of food for the sick. The cooking in the hospital is more careful, and somewhat better foods, such as corn, rice and even small quantities of canned meat, find their way to the plate, but the portions are as tiny as those in camp.

At the time I was there, the prisoners' hospital took up several barracks which were surrounded by barbed wire and were complete with watch towers and a commander of the guard.

It was through my work in the prisoners' hospitals that I learned a great deal not only about the several women's camps and their prisoners, but also about the male prisoners in all the camps of Kolyma, Indigirka, and Chokotsk. I was able to put together some picture of the fate of thousands of prisoners. In addition, communication by word from person to person has reached a high development throughout the Soviet Union, particularly among prisoners. This is a consequence of the government's absolute policy of keeping secret things which in other countries are published in the newspapers.

It is only natural that a nurse in the prisoners' hospital, who closes the eyes of hundreds of prisoners and delivers to the office a monthly report on her hospital room, will get a very good idea of the death rate among the prisoners. It is natural that she will draw conclusions on conditions of camp life, work, and food.

Subjects usually avoided are whispered to a nurse by men on the point of death. Even the most innocent nurse would begin to wonder why during 1939 and 1940 the hospitals were filled with patients who had been condemned in 1937 and 1938, while after 1941 it was rare for a prisoner condemned during those years to appear in the hospitals. It was certainly not because all them had suddenly stopped getting sick, but because they had meanwhile died in the gold mines.

Before even a single prisoner from our reform labor camps was admitted to the camps of the katorga prisoners, we learned about the mass deaths in those

camps through the reports of the chief of the public health organization, for our hospital was under him. This same chief ordered the drug department of our hospital to prepare skin disease materials by the pound, for all the Katorga prisoners suffered from skin diseases as well as dysentery.

In addition, secret reports and numbers were given to prisoners doing typing to copy or total, because the free citizens are too lazy and have grown accustomed to put off as many of their duties as possible upon prisoners.

On the average there were fifty patients in a hospital barrack. This was the general medicine section. The head was a free woman doctor (at that time Dr. Fasselkova), who was assisted by a male doctor, a prisoner. Every section had two prisoner nurses who were on duty twenty-four hours at a time before relieving each other. Of the twenty-four "free" hours, part was lost in roll calls, the ceremony of marching out to work, waiting for guards, and standing in line for food.

In the beginning it was extremely difficult to get used to twenty-four hour period of duty. At night the doctor and a guard made the rounds through all the hospital rooms at different times. If a nurse was found asleep, a report was made to the chief doctor next day, and the guilty nurse lost her hospital job. I worked for two years without a single day free; substitute nurses were later introduced, but at that time there were none. Although you get accustomed to the hours to some extent, you suffer for lack of sleep every night, not every other day.

The death rate in our ward amounted to ten or fifteen deaths a month out of fifty beds, a figure that I found fairly common in other hospitals where I later worked. In the operation room it was somewhat higher, in the women's wards considerably lower. But only about half of the prisoner deaths occur in the large hospitals; the other half of the deaths take place in the camps, the camp hospitals, and the camps for those not able to work.

Prisoners were classed into one of several labor groups:

1. Heavy physical labor (TFT).
2. Average physical labor (SFT).
3. Light physical labor (LFT).

In practice the camp commanders rarely followed these groupings, for one reason because they had no light work to assign. There were two additional groups to which prisoners were assigned upon release from the hospital:

4. Sick but working.
5. Sick, not working.

The working sick were in better situation, because they were frequently used as clerks or other such work inside the camp.

THE PATIENTS

Most of the patients from the ships were carried in suffering from blood dysentery, from which they seldom recovered. They lay side by side and watched one after another of their comrades lose the fight.

They looked straight into my eyes and said, "I'm next, nurse." There was no use lying to them; they knew their fate as well as I did. And when I came in with the bottles and needles which were used at the last hour to give them large amounts of normal solution under their skins, they whispered, "So it's time now." Many of them fought desperately against this treatment because they had seen their fellows die shortly after them.

In spite of the miserable existence of the prisoners, almost all of them clung to life. Only among criminals whose condition was without hope did I observe unusual strength of character. When they realized that nothing could help them, they did everything they could to bring on death more swiftly.

The prisoners most open to disease were those from Central Asia—from Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Tadzhikistan, and Khirgiz—and the Caucasians, Georgians, Armenians, Chechens. . . . Brought from the hot climate of their regions to the coldest regions in the world, they died like flies. All their life forces were frozen as soon as they went out into the terrible cold. They did not try to defend themselves. They let themselves be driven out to the gold mines. There they simply did not move. They stood without moving, their arms crossed, their bowed heads thrust between their shoulders, waiting for the end. They did not respond at all to orders and curses. Blows were useless—it was as hopeless as asking tin soldiers to move.

The better guards, who realized that these people could not be made to work because in this cold they

simply stopped functioning, used their rifle handles to drive the prisoners around and around in a circle, not to be cruel, but out of pity, because they simply could not look on while the men stood frozen until they fell over like so many dolls. "Another frozen to death," the prisoners would note. "Temperature shock," the doctor would record.

When one of them entered the hospital, it was certain that he would leave it feet first. While their Russian comrades fought for life to the last breath, they waited like sheep for death. This fatal idea of certain death, this complete surrender to the thought of death made it impossible to save them, although Russians with similar cases would overcome the disease. While the Russian patients swallowed their medicine with a child's faith in their powers to cure, the Central Asians took the medicine without belief or care, convinced that it would not help at all.

Many died of disease of the chest, many of internal diseases, many of dysentery and skin diseases caused by lack of food. But the real sickness was the cold, the lack of sun, and the shock of being in prison. These people, many of whom were from wandering tribes, could not endure being in prison.

A new patient. Accompanied by the attendant he stumbled into the barrack, crawled into his bed and lay on his face, groaning. His temperature read 103.7.

Since I had to take down the information on his case, I asked him to turn over. He groaned in protest. I looked at his record from the camp health center: sore chest walls. You don't generally lie on your face

with sore chest walls. I tried to move him with care but he screamed in pain.

I removed the clothes from his back. What I saw was an active, brown-red wound, surrounded by a growth of flesh, and a series of raised spots and blood stained marks spreading out over his whole back.

"How did you get this wound?"

"Bad boil," he replied.

"What happened to it?"

"I broke it open," he whispered.

"How so?"

Like someone repeating a lesson, he said: "I broke it open myself. With my sack."

"Who was with you?"

"The guard."

"Rest now," I said, covering with care his torn back. As I bent over him, he whispered, "He kept saying I was walking too slow. . . ."

When the doctor came back after examining this patient, he gave voice to his feelings. Then he noticed my presence and said he was sorry. He sat down at his desk and again began cursing. A second time he said he was sorry. Then he cursed again.

"There's no need to ask for excuses," I said. "That is all that can be said about that terrible boil."

At night, when everyone was asleep and I sat at the sleepless man's bed, his fear left him and he talked. I suppose also that he felt that he was not long for this world, so that there was little he need fear. And so, in painful short breaths, he told me that the guard had wanted to end the unpleasant march as soon as possible, and so he had driven the sick,

feverish prisoner for hours with blows of a club. At the end of the march he had threatened to break every bone in the prisoner's body if the man reported at the hospital that the guard had beaten him.

The club treatment might well have been fatal anyway for a case of sick chest walls. But every blow had fallen upon the active boil, and the result was bloodpoisoning.

Our angry doctor, himself a prisoner, made a report to the free head doctor. "What good are hospitals and a medical staff and expensive American medicines when any guard can beat a prisoner?" he asked at the conclusion of his report.

The head doctor at that time was Doctor Ruban, a person with human mercy who immediately declared he was ready to do something about the affair if the sick man would make a statement. But the sick man refused to repeat what he had told me. He answered all questions with the dull phrase: "I did it myself, with my sack; I did it myself, myself."

So we let him die in peace, and the guard went on beating prisoners undisturbed. The word of a prisoner doctor would not be sufficient to bring charges against a free citizen.

* * *

The medicine cabinet of the hospital room could not be left unlocked for a moment, for both the attendants and the sick men were always ready for the chance to take away anything that even resembled *alcohol*. Every liquid prepared with an alcohol base would vanish at once, and without water, down their

thirsty throats. In the hospital many internal organs such as hearts and so on were preserved in alcohol. Once, when the hospital attendant, a man of almost sixty, came down with a spell of mental depression, he drank up the preserving liquid, and the preserved organs were left dry.

Medicine to relieve pain was collected by the patients so that they could get a thrill with a large amount at one time.

If you did not watch carefully, a secretly paid male nurse would dip cotton into the *ether* bottle and slip it to some seriously ill patient, who would then hide happily under the blankets to give himself an ether drunk.

SELF INJURY

Work is a matter of honor, the heroism
and the glory of every Soviet citizen.

Stalin

Even in camp we were never spared the flags, sayings, speeches, and quotes from Stalin which were the universal madness of the Soviet Union.

Above the entrance to the dining room were the words: "He who does not work shall not eat."

There was no doubt that you went hungry in camp if you did not work. Unfortunately those who worked also went hungry.

On all the walls were signs: "Place yourself in the ranks of the best workers." The best workers were

those who were still fresh, whose energies had not yet been drained. There was no advice on how a prisoner who had suffered many years of near-starving was to find the strength to be a "best worker."

"Two-hundred percenters, teach the others to be like you!"

The trick is: do as little as possible and secretly pay the group leader with money or liquor, preferably both, so that he will credit the labor of others to you, thus making you a two-hundred percenter. Women could repay such a service on the part of the group leader without money or liquor.

"Honest work is the way to early release!"

Only the doctor can release a prisoner from work. Refusal to work is punished by a term in the camp prison. A record of the case is made and signed by the camp commander, the commander of the guard, and the doctor. From three to five such notes are sufficient to bring one who avoids work to trial. In time of peace he was given additional terms of from five to ten years on the basis of Section 58, Article 14: counter-revolutionary damage. During the war counter-revolutionaries who refused to work were shot; criminals usually got off with an additional sentence of ten years.

In general, cases of refusal to work among the so-called counter-revolutionaries are rare by comparison. It is the criminals who try to avoid all kinds of work. They have usually turned to crime because of dislike for work, and regular work is painful for them. For a few weeks at a time they will work hard and break all marks at work—and then they are through with it.

They walk around thinking of plans to get into the hospital. Some of them drink salt water. They swell up and are excused from work. Some may steal a needle from the health center and put oil under their skin. This results in bloody sores which keep them in the hospital for weeks.

Or in the morning, before departing for work, others may wrap a wet foot-rag around one of their feet. In the evening they come back with third-degree injuries from frozen toes. The same trick can be used on the fingers.

There is another method that many criminals make use of. They lay their left hand on a block of wood and with an axe cut off their three middle fingers, leaving the little finger and the thumb. With two fingers they cannot hold a cart in the gold mines, but when they are finally released they can still do other kinds of work with the injured hand.

Acid and colored powder are rubbed on the eyes, producing characteristics similar to those of a serious eye disease. The criminals also have a trick, which they keep absolutely secret, for producing effects exactly like sex diseases.

Out of the stems and roots of plant, a kind of substitute for tobacco, they make a tea which produces heart trouble and fever. They also rub under their arms with onions before their temperature is taken. This produces a higher reading, but onions are worth fifty rubles each in Kolyma and are very rare.

Back trouble is a favorite camp sickness, but a good many prisoners have to stumble sadly off to work because they tried to make too much of a good

thing and pretended to have back trouble on both sides—which is impossible.

A great many prisoners pretend they are crazy, some for years. There are special hospitals for mentally-sick prisoners. But even real and proved mental disease is not sufficient for the release of a prisoner in the Soviet Union.

KILLING YOURSELF

The last way out is killing yourself. This is a way never chosen by the criminals, though it is occasionally taken by male counter-revolutionaries and less frequently by female counter-revolutionaries. The chief reason for the relatively low rate of self destruction is the fact that prisoners are never alone. The very fact that thousands of others are enduring the same fate tends to keep down the thought of killing oneself.

There is a constant flow of stories to the effect that changed sentences, pardons, easing of the rules, or improved amounts of food are "on the way." No one believes these stories; they are laughed at, but they nevertheless leave a lingering ray of hope.

Women are far more enduring than men. A man can reach a point of exhaustion where he no longer recognizes anything but food and sleep. A woman will still try to preserve a part of her dignity. And men are also better able to become accustomed to physical labor. To be exact, wood chopping is lighter than the work in the gold mines, from which women

are excused. But the change from working as a secretary, housewife, or teacher to wood chopping is no easier than the change from a professor or author to a gold miner. In almost every case it was the thinker or author who chose death by freezing, hanging, or jumping from the tower of the mill into the deep hole of the mine, rather than endure the slow, deadly torture of the camp.

Members of the family are not informed, no matter whether death is "natural" or violent. The fact is entered into the records, and the prisoners' papers are transferred to another file which bears the distinguishing mark: "File Number 3."

THE TRADITION OF THE POTEMKIN VILLAGES

WALLACE IN MAGADAN

None of the numerous high commissions ever caused so much excitement as Henry Wallace's visit to Kolyma during the war. Some time before the visit took place, a continuing story warmed the souls of the freezing prisoners; in return for help in the war the Soviet Union was going to give Kolyma to the United States. Even the most serious and most reasonable of the prisoners accepted the possibility, and long discussions were held as to whether in that case the prisoners would also be turned over to America. It was the usual prisoners' fairy tale, as impossible as it was lasting. And it received tremendous support

when news came of the coming visit of the American Vice-President.

Wallace traveled through the Asiatic portions of the Soviet Union in order to observe the capacity of Soviet industry. In Kolyma the NKVD performed its job with great success. Wallace saw nothing at all of this frozen hell with its hundreds of thousands of the condemned to hell on earth.

The roads leading to Magadan were lined with wooden watch towers. In honor of Wallace these towers were torn down in a single night.

At the edge of the city there were several prison camps, among them the large women's camp with its several thousand prisoners. These prisoners worked in various places throughout the city. Every prisoner who was there at the time owes Mr. Wallace a debt of thanks. On the day that he arrived, the day of his visit and the day of his departure, not a single prisoner was allowed to leave the camp.

This was not enough. Although the road for Mr. Wallace and his group was carefully prepared in advance, there was still the possibility that by chance the visitor would catch sight of the prisoners in the camp yard—which would not have been a pleasant sight. Therefore, on orders from above, movies were shown to the prisoners from morning till night for three days. No prisoners went walking in the yard.

And how could Mr. Wallace know that the city of Magadan, which had risen so swiftly out of the wilderness, had been built with prison labor only; that women prisoners had carried the beams and ricks to the building grounds?

He probably did not realize that he had planted confusion among the prettily dressed farm girls at the model farm by asking them an innocent question about the pigs. For these girls were not farm girls at all; they were a group of good-looking office girls who had been ordered to play a part especially for Mr. Wallace's visit.

Mr. Wallace was also pleased to note the rich variety of Russian products in the show windows of Magadan. He made a point of going into a store to examine the Russian products and to buy some small item. The citizens of Magadan were even more surprised than Mr. Wallace at the Russian products that appeared within one day in the shop windows, because for the past two years all the—absolutely controlled—products which could be bought had been of American origin. But the NKVD had gone to the trouble of digging things up from the most remote stores and valuable private collections in order to impress Mr. Wallace.

Then Mr. Wallace went home and wrote his report with enthusiasm for Soviet Asia. The watch towers were put up again, the prisoners sent out to work again, and in the empty shop windows were to be seen nothing but a few sad looking boxes of matches covered with dust.

DEVYATKA

Devyat means "nine" in Russian. A certain store in Magadan is popularly called devyatka, that is, the

"store for the nine." Only nine families carry the special pass which allows them to make purchases in this store.

Who are the special persons in the "land of the workers and peasants" who may buy at the treasures of this luxury store, where even during the war everything was available, from oranges, candy, and foreign sweets to the most select clothing, fine shoes, and American tobacco—all things that the ordinary Soviet citizen does not even dream of having for thirty years? Who are the "heroes of labor" who, with their families, are entitled to special rewards? They are:

1. The chief of the Dalstroi Company, the supreme head of Kolyma, Indigirka and Chukotsk—Lieutenant General Nikishov.
2. His second, Colonel Gakayev.
3. The chief of the political administration.
4. The chief of supplies.
5. The chief of the NKVD troops in Kolyma.
6. The chief of the guard troops in Kolyma.
7. The chief of the regular troops in Kolyma.
8. The chief of the economic department.
9. The chief of the health department of all the camps of Kolyma, Indigirka, and Chukotsk.

Not another soul can enter this store, no matter how honestly he may have earned his money. This accords beautifully with the basic principle of full socialism, which according to Stalin has already been attained: "From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs."

AFTER THE WAR

THE "OVERTIMERS"

Prisoners the world over count the years, months and weeks, and finally the days, to their freedom. I had taken a match box and put in one match for every month of my term. Five years are sixty months—sixty matches. Every month I would take out another match. One day in the summer of 1942 I threw away the last match.

And then nothing happened.

As ever, the rail screamed for us to march out in the morning; as ever, the guards cursed; as ever, the group leader shouted in a hundred different tones.

A year and a half after I had thrown away the last one of the sixty matches the commander of the guard handed me a slip of paper at evening roll call and asked me to sign. It read:

"The prisoner, Elinor Lipper, condemned to five years in reform labor camp, has completed her term of punishment. However, she is to be kept in camp until the end of the war. She has been informed of this decision."

And days, weeks, months, years passed, hope passed, life passed. Faster, faster. Get going, get going. Weary hungry, cold. To lie for once in a clean bed, to be alone for a day, to live for a single day without hearing the loud ring of the rail. . . . What

does an apple smell like? Do railroads still run somewhere in the world?

Years passed. May 1945 came—the day of victory, with meetings and speeches. Prisoners embraced one another, their eyes filled with tears of happiness, of hope.

And nothing happened.

Days and weeks and months and years passed. The year of victory, 1945, passed. The year 1946 passed. That was my tenth year in prison. One woman prisoner more or less—who cared?

To all my letters, requests, questions: “When will you release me?” I received the standard reply: “We are waiting for an order from Moscow.”

A prisoner who has served his sentence is not released immediately. The camp sends a conduct report to the proper authorities and must receive approval of release.

All other persons condemned on some counter-revolutionary charge were informed that they were being held in camp until the end of the war. These people were called “overtimers.” However, they were not released immediately after the end of the war either; their releases began to come through by list in the spring of 1946, and went according to name, so that persons whose names began with A or B were free by May, while those whose names began with W, Y, or Z were kept in camp until late fall. But even then some individuals who had been condemned as Trotskyists were still held. When I left Kolyma at the end of 1946, they were still waiting for a decision,

although many had already served ten years instead of their original sentences of five years.

AFTER RELEASE

Every prisoner who is being released receives a paper known as Form Number 25. It is good only at the place of issue and does not permit the holder to travel to other places. Only after some time has passed does the former prisoner receive his permit to travel within the country. (No Soviet citizen receives an international permit except those few whom the government is sending abroad.) This permit to travel in Russia is marked with a rubber stamp which is called the "except 135." This means that the bearer may not settle in any of the 135 largest cities of the Soviet Union, or within sixty miles of them, nor in any border areas of administration centers. He is also not allowed to return to his former home. When this paper is prepared, the former prisoner must indicate where he wants to settle; if the place is approved, it is written down in his permit.

The state pays a released prisoner's travel expenses from the camp to his place of settlement. Wherever he goes, he is at once marked as a former prisoner.

The prisoner who is released in Kolyma has to obey additional rules. If he is under fifty and not officially declared a sick person by the labor commission, he can not leave Kolyma. Persons over fifty will not be allowed to leave if their skills happen to be seriously needed in Kolyma, that is, if they are doctors, mineral

experts, engineers, chemical engineers, bookkeepers, cooks, tailors. . . .

Released foreigners who never were Soviet citizens are shipped to their native lands. This is what happened to me. This law is observed in the case of the citizens of a few countries only—France, Holland, Switzerland, e.g., whose governments must still be recognized by the USSR. Thousands of German citizens who fled to Russia after 1933 were sent to prison, and those who survived, when released, had to stay in the USSR. This applies also to many defeated Spanish republicans, and to thousands from the countries of eastern Europe who now have communist governments. All these constitute the great majority of foreign “dangerous elements” trapped in the USSR. This explains why so few books like this have been written—so few have returned to tell. The author’s release was due to the active help of the Swiss authorities, because she had become a Swiss citizen by marriage in 1935.

THE HORROR MILL CONTINUES

Aside from criminals, peasants formed the main body of so-called counter-revolutionary prisoners during the 1930’s. After the murder of Kirov in 1934, large groups of workers and students and thinkers were sent to the camps. At the end of 1936 and in 1937 and 1938 there began a continuous stream of counter-revolutionaries from all classes of the population and from all the towns and villages of the Union

republics. In 1939 and 1940 came the Poles who were arrested in large numbers after the division of their country. In 1941 they enjoyed a pardon, since they were to be formed into a Polish liberty army to fight Hitler.

People from the Balkan countries, many of them Jews, who had fled before Hitler's armies, were arrested immediately after they crossed the borders of the Soviet Union and were condemned to either three years as border crossers or to eight years as suspected spies. Both groups had to remain in prison for eight years, since the border crossers were not released during the war.

In 1941 a new kind of prisoner came in. An order was issued which provided that any worker who left his job in a war factory, no matter for what reasons, was subject to from six to eight years in prison. Hundreds of young girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty were sent to Kolyma for running away to their villages because they could no longer endure the starving conditions in the cities where they had been forced to work. Some had only gone back home for a few days to visit a sick mother, but the factory manager would not give them any days off. When they returned they were arrested. They came as clean young girls and were instantly changed by Kolyma into complete sex tramps.

In 1944 and 1945, when the Soviet armies were advancing to the west, war prisoners came from the freed areas. Thousands of young Latvians and Lithuanians were first kept in prison in Kolyma and

then forced to become part of a colony under the name of "special groups."

Thousands of people who had endured against their will the German occupation were convicted of spying and sent to Kolyma on ten-year terms only for this reason, or because they were victims of the growing practice of secretly accusing one's friends.

At this time other hundreds of young girls between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two were sent to Kolyma on charges of spying. These were western Ukrainians—after the war Poland gave western Ukraine to the Soviet Union—who had belonged to the "bandyerovtsi" organization. Polish fighters later told me that this organization had committed the most frightful and inhuman crimes against both Polish and Soviet citizens and that it had carried out many group killings, urged on by the Germans, the Ukrainians, the priests, and the members' own savage feelings. They had been arrested and were being punished. But why had Soviet officers, questioning seventeen-year-old girls, broken the girls' collar-bones and kicked in their ribs with heavy military boots so that they lay dripping blood at the mouth in the prison hospitals of Kolyma? Certainly such treatment had not convinced any of them that what they had done was evil. They died with tin images of Mary the mother of Jesus on their broken chests, and with hate in their eyes.

And then, in 1946, the home-comers came to Kolyma. These were women and girls whom the Germans had carried away from the Ukraine to Germany, where they had been put to work in Nazi war fac-

tories. The war had ended and the slave laborers, sick with the memory of home, and eager, at last boarded the trains for the Soviet Union. The same fate was reserved for them as for the unfortunate Russian soldiers who had been taken prisoner by the Germans—for a soldier of the Soviet Army was not supposed to be taken prisoner; he should have fought to the death.

There were no prisoner-of-war camps for Germans in Kolyma, but there were such camps for Japanese prisoners. The prisoners worked only eight hours a day, and their own former officers, who did not have to do any physical work, functioned as group leaders. Usually they were employed in road building. They received a definite amount of food which was independent of the amount of work they did.

Before the war, during the war, and after the war, continuous new crowds of prisoners were ground to dust. The snows of Kolyma covered the graves; the gold mines along the Indigirka swallowed more and more prisoners; the vast frozen area of Chukotsk, rich in coal, *uranium*, and other metals, demanded more and more laborers.

No one knows their names. No one can count the dead.

But the Soviet Union is rich and mighty, and the Soviet people stand united behind their Leader. So it is said, so written. United? Who then are these twelve million prisoners—a figure the NKVD officials admit again and again—who are constantly filling the prisons and camps of the Soviet Union? If they are really against the government, then the government

can rule only by crushing with savage force twelve millions of the people in whose name it rules. On the other hand, if they are innocent victims, as in fact they are, who can assert that this government and its leaders are what they say they are, the men who give liberty to the people?

* * *

In describing my experiences in Kolyma I have had to change the order of events to give a picture of the total scene. I am now going to review my terms in Kolyma camps in their proper order.

I spent the first two years in Kolyma in Magadan women's camp (Shen-Olp) and worked in the prisoners' hospital, which was near the camp, but in town.

After the beginning of the war I was shipped on a small boat to Balagannoye, and from there by truck through the forest to Camp Talon, which is on the Taui River, twenty-three miles from Balagannoye. There I worked as a snow-shoveler, wood chopper, attendant, field worker and finally as a nurse in the camp hospital. After about a year I was sent back. In Balagannoye we were again placed aboard a small boat, of which I have the most unpleasant memories. It was raining, the boat rocked madly, and I was never so sick in my life. Just as I had reached the point where I thought I was going to lose my very stomach, we arrived in Magadan.

Then my health broke down and I entered the Central Prisoners' Hospital. When I was well again, I went back to the women's camp at Magadan. For two months I worked in the icy vegetable supply

house (for the free population), sorting potatoes. More than half of them had been allowed to spoil or freeze, but there were no potatoes for prisoners; the authorities preferred to let them spoil. For months I went out with my group every day at dawn, marching through the sleeping city of Magadan to the smelling potato supply house. But soon I was to remember that short time with envy, for I was shipped to Elgen.

Everything I had experienced before seemed pale compared to the horrors of Elgen, where I spent two years, living in each of the three branch camps as well as in the main camp. At first I was in the foreigners' camp, five miles from Elgen. I worked there in the woods, and at a rude work-bench where I made thin wooden pieces, that were called Finnish roof boards. After work I walked back and forth the five miles to Elgen hospitals to get the most necessary medicines for the sick prisoners in my camp, who were in my care. Then I was in swift order shifted to the main Elgen camp, where I worked at digging ditches, then to the farm base, the branch camp of Volchok, two miles from Elgen. Here I worked in the fields from planting to harvest time and also gathered tree branches in the forests around Elgen. Often we had to march six miles in our foot rags without shape before we reached our place of work. The following winter I escaped wood chopping and became a basket maker. In the spring I was in another branch camp, Polevoi Stan, three miles from Elgen in the opposite direction. There I worked at planting. And so it went, back and forth between main camp and branch

camps, from one job to the next, and to this day I cannot say which was the worst.

By an extraordinary piece of good luck I became ill and was sent to the Central Prisoners' Hospital of the northern mine district (112 miles from Elgen and three miles from Yagodnoye). After I recovered I worked there as a nurse for a year and a half. But my work as a nurse, which I loved, was constantly interrupted by a strong fever and attacks of weakness. Finally, after a two-day journey in an open truck, I landed again in the hospital near Magadan. Autumn number eight of my stay in Kolyma I was again in Magadan women's camp, this time employed as a cleaning woman.

And then the thing happened which I had no longer dared to believe possible: I was placed on a ship, and after a journey of another nine months I was returned to freedom, to my home. Home!

THE ROAD BACK

ON THE SHIP

A ship was in the port. Along the side of the ship tiny dark creatures crawled upward. But they were not actually crawling up the side; it only looked that way from a distance. Actually people were climbing the almost straight up and down iron steps to the ship.

My bag with my few necessary things on my back,

I nervously, with fear and doubt placed one foot after another upon the narrow steps. Higher and higher. Once I looked down at the narrow space of water between land and ship, and I felt sick.

Keep in mind that you are traveling on orders from Moscow! Where to? No information given. What for? No information given. Was I on the road to freedom? But the guards did not leave for a moment our small group of prisoners. We were finally put away inside the ship.

Here was a hell where people fought with one another for a drink of water. I looked around at the gray-faced male prisoners in our locked store-room, sick, losing their half digested food on the floor, or bent over the beaten can where they must also relieve themselves before the eyes of the two women who were locked in with them. I looked at them lying above and on top of one another. Their fingers cut off where fingers had been frozen; their legs were covered with sores. There was one young boy with a big hole where his nose had been; the nose had been frozen off. They stared hungrily at the women; for seven years they had not seen a woman. At night they took turns on one of the women, without shame, barely covered by a torn blanket, while the rest looked on hungrily. I was the other woman; I hid in my little space, not able to sleep for fear, beating off the hungry beasts with my feet and my arms.

We arrived at Bukhta Nakhodka, where there was a place on the floor for us in the crowded barrack for prisoners being moved. I ate a farewell soup of spoiled potatoes which had a horrible smell. Then a

short march and we stood—at the railroad station! There was a train engine, a real train engine. The first one I had seen for eight years. I wished I could touch it. But my feelings of tenderness vanished when I entered the prison car.

THE PRISON CAR

It had been an ordinary passenger car originally. The sections were without windows except for a small hole eight-inches wide and with bars. The sections were entered by a barred iron door kept locked throughout the journey. There were iron bars instead of glass in the window to either side of this door.

The lowest space in the section consists of two wooden benches. Above are two more wooden benches, connected by a sheet of iron. Above these again are a third level of two more benches. Thus the section is divided into three layers. There is a hole large enough for a man to climb through at the door. Through this hole the second and third levels are reached.

Into such a section as many as twenty-five people were pushed. And the journeys lasted four, five, and six days from one prison to another. Food during the journey consisted of seventeen and a half ounces of bread, a small piece of salted fish, and now and then a teaspoonful of sugar. Usually the sugar was taken away in whatever transfer prison we happened to be staying.

We suffered the tortures of prison cars and transfer

prisons for more than two months before we reached Kazakhstan. It was not the crowded condition in the sections or the hunger that bothered us most, it was thirst. We screamed ourselves sick for a drop of cold water, while the food and the steaming tea pot for the guards were carried along the narrow passage way past us. There was water at every station, but not for us.

"You dogs, you give us salt fish and nothing to drink," a voice screamed.

The guard in the passage way came threatening to the barred door, "What did you say, you tramp?"

"Nothing. I want a drink."

"You'll have to wait."

At last they came. Two guards with a single can of water. A hole in the barred door was opened. They counted the number of prisoners in the section. Then one of the guards dipped a tin cup into the can and handed it through the opening while the other counted the cups. A single cup was used to serve a hundred prisoners one after the other.

As in ordinary railroad cars, there was a toilet at either end of the car. In the passage way stood the guards, nearly asleep with nothing to do. It was only a few steps from the door to the toilet. The prisoners pleaded, begged, shouted, screamed:

"Let us out, let us out."

Many were sick, many suffering from dysentery from their meals of black bread, salt fish, and un-boiled water. But the prisoners were allowed out to the toilet only twice every twenty-four hours, although it was only a few steps and the guards stood

idly in the passage way all day long. Those were the rules. It was rare for the guards in charge of the moving of prisoners to take pity and allow the prisoners out a third time. And so the prisoners cried and groaned, screamed and cursed, as they were transported like wild beasts from one prison cell to the next. And when they could no longer endure it and were forced to relieve themselves in the section, they were kicked and beaten with rifle ends.

VLADIVOSTOK

After a day's journey the gates of Vladivostok Prison closed behind us. We spent ten days in prison in Vladivostok. During these we sat four to a cell six and a half feet wide and nine feet long, without exercise and without light. Then we were loaded into the prison car again.

KHABAROVSK

A colorful group of prisoners rode with us to the transfer prison of Khabarovsk. Some of them were Japanese in fancy high fur caps and long, fur-trimmed coats; the rest were young offenders between the ages of twelve and sixteen. They were sickly, thin, half grown children. Almost all of them were to serve three-year terms for stealing.

We had already eaten up the bread which was supposed to last us for three days. If it was almost impos-

sible for us adults to save our food, how could these starving children possibly do it? Moreover, they would steal each other's bread, so that each knew his bread was safest in his stomach.

Twice a day, like all the rest, they were let out in pairs to go to the toilet. On the way there the tortured little fellows ran as fast as they could. They tried to extend the short walk back through the passage way, especially when they passed the women's cages, for they hoped to be given a tiny bit of bread or a little tobacco. Fifty pairs of young eyes looked in on us with curiosity and hope, some demanding, some begging, all hungry. Long, torn pants hung down over their torn shoes; their little gray hands were not visible inside the long arms of men's coats that reached down below their knees. Their blue lips poured forth a stream of dirty remarks, complete with dirty motions and curses such as even grown-up criminals seldom used in the presence of women. Then they vanished behind their own barred door, where they fought for places and where now and then a small boy who could not defend himself cried loudly.

The train stopped at the railroad station in Khabarovsk. The guards of the transfer prison took charge of us. One door after the other was opened and individuals called out by name. One after the other the boys jumped down from the high step to the snow-covered station. They were not burdened by a bundle, for they owned nothing at all. Their hands buried in their long coat arms as in a tube, they bent their legs down in snow side by side, with bowed heads,

as they had been ordered to do. Those whose ears were not covered with a rag turned blue with cold.

Then we all ran quickly to the van which was to take us to the transfer prison.

IRKUTSK

After another few days we got on the prison car once more, this time for a five-day journey to Irkutsk. Several young sex tramps from our cage, heavy-breasted women with fat legs and pictures marked on their arms, who wore their bright head coverings inclined over one ear, put themselves at the service of the guards; supposedly they went into the guards' section to wash the floor. They returned with a large supply of tobacco which they gave away freely to us and to the loud boys in the next cage, for sex tramps are the most generous of all prisoners.

The transfer prison of Irkutsk, of ill reputation since the days of the Tsar, has lost nothing of this dreadful reputation among prisoners. The crowded cells were full of bed insects and head insects, and the door is opened only once a day to remove the can, a horrible smelling can that must take care of the needs of eighty prisoners for twenty-four hours. There is no place to wash and the prisoners are not allowed to go out for a walk.

NOVOSIBIRSK

Our next stop after several days of travel was a cell in the transfer prison of Novosibirsk. On the two layers of boards the women prisoners lie crowded together. This is a perfectly ordinary Soviet prison cell: dark, with a small barred window high up in the wall, so closed by its wooden cover that only a tiny bit of sky can be seen, but nothing of the cells opposite or of the prison yard. In one corner is the can, and in all corners are rats who jump shrieking over the faces of the sleepers. Yet they are less disturbing than the bed insects which are there in armies, and which can neither be driven away nor caught.

Something cries on the top level. Those are not rats; they are the ten-day-old twins who are being shipped with their mother from one camp to another and must wait in between in the cell of the transfer prison. For although women prisoners are not permitted any relations with the opposite sex, the boast of the criminals remains: "They can rob us of our freedom, but not our nature." And during the long years of camp life many children are born, in spite of the close guard—and frequently with the help of the guards, who are highly attracted by the charms of sex tramps among the women prisoners.

On my right lay a Ukrainian peasant woman, her arm around her five-year-old girl, who lay beside her eight-year-old sister. Beside them the sixteen-year-old daughter cried in her sleep.

CHELYABINSK

We arrived in Chelyabinsk on a holiday, Constitution Day. With police dogs at our heels, driven on by rude guards, we marched for miles through the flag-flying streets of the town. Some of the prisoners were tied by their hand to one another in pairs. In the first rows marched a group of young robbers. Grown people passing by glanced quickly at us and hurried away. Prisoners are too common a sight in Siberia to attract attention. And it would be dangerous to show sympathy for them.

After we had been registered, the men and women were separated. We were taken out to a yard, in the middle of which was a circle about thirty feet across surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence.

Wet from our long march, we threw our bags down in the snow and sat on them. But after ten minutes we were so thoroughly frozen that we got up in spite of being tired and began running up and down between the round walls of barbed wire. It was one of Chelyabinsk's delights to make prisoners wait out in the snow in December. Darkness fell and we were still running. A huge light lit our frozen faces, faces that in spite of the cold reflected our helpless fury. For three hours we waited in the snow. If only we were in our cell and able to rest. We long before forgot that we had eaten nothing all day long.

Once in the cell we had trouble finding a place to sit on the floor. So the first night passed, and then

four more days and nights. And then again we marched the five miles back to the railroad station and the prison car. For an entire day we stood at a side track in Orenburg. The train to which our car was to be attached had left without us.

SOL-ILYETSK

Fifty miles from Orenburg we were unloaded again. After being marched to the prison we were given baths—in the usual fashion. Then we were distributed among various cells.

Prisoners of this cell asked anxiously whether they were being sent to Kolyma. I calmed them with the Kolyma saying: The first five years are the hardest; then you get used to it.

I had had ten years! They looked at me with the same admiring expression with which I, too, many, many years ago, had looked at the first prisoners who told me of their long years in prison. And when they asked me how these years could possibly pass, I answered with a verse from a song that all prisoners in all camps sing when they lie on the boards and stare up at the ceiling:

Wherever you look
The world is dead
And slowly, so slowly
The day passes by. . . .

Our sacks on our aching shoulders, we ran down an ice-covered hill toward the railroad station. We had

been marched to the station almost an hour before the train arrived.

AKTYUBINSK

This was our last ride in the prison car. One hundred and sixty-five miles south-east of Orenburg we were unloaded. With some difficulty, for waiting at the station were only the local police with a group of prisoners from the local police prison. The local police were not the proper authorities to take charge of us. But the commander of the prison car refused to accept the prisoners of the local police unless the local police received us in exchange. Finally they made a bargain.

The train whistle had already sounded for the second time when, with a sigh of relief, we jumped down on the platform. We had missed by a hair riding another five days to Tashkent and waiting there in the prison to be shipped back. How many thousands of useless miles have been traveled in this way! Who cares? Who pays for it? The Soviet Economic system.

We spent the night in the local police prison, which was pleasantly located at the back of a small garden with snow-covered trees. The officer who received us remarked to the guard: "It doesn't matter what cell you put them in. They're going to the German camp tomorrow."

To make things simple, the men were thrown into the closed cell, an ice-cold cell with bare walls and a bare stone floor, where they spent the entire night

jumping up and down in order not to freeze to death. We stretched out on the floor of a women's cell. But I could not sleep. "German camp, German camp." The words kept going around in my head. Was that to be the end of my journey to freedom?

THE NAZI CAMP

Camp for Civil Prisoners Number 222. Its prisoners were Nazis from East Prussia and Upper Silisia who had been arrested and brought here immediately after the Soviet troops marched into those areas. There were about a thousand men and a hundred women in the camp. Like the Kazakhs, the native population outside the camp, they lived in little houses made of earth, barracks under the ground level of which only the narrow windows and the round, mud covered roof were above the ground. By Soviet standards these earth barracks were very large. Every prisoner had his straw bed and blankets, and in winter each received a sheep-skin and soft boots—things no Russian prisoner would dream of having.

The official hours of labor were eight for prisoners in good health and only six for the weak and the old—many of the prisoners were over fifty. The lowest food allowance was seventeen and a half ounces of bread, and all prisoners received this without relation to their production. In addition there were bread prizes for good work. The rest of the food consisted of soup three times a day, grain twice a day, and once a day either a meat sauce made of salt meat of doubtful

quality, or some fish. In addition the prisoners received ten and a half ounces of sugar a month, and five ounces of tobacco.

In spite of the shorter hours of work and the better food compared with the Russian prison camps, the great majority of the prisoners were in terrible health, and hundreds of sick prisoners were constantly in the sick barracks suffering from lack of food. Another dread disease was yellow fever, from which 90 per cent of the prisoners suffered. The Germans simply could not get used to the food or to the climate—extreme heat in summer and ice storms in winter. Their spirit was terribly low.

We had been brought to this camp in order to be sent home, although we learned this not through official sources. My comrades from Kolyma, whose long road of suffering was at last to end here, were mostly people who had fled from the advancing Nazis. Many of them were Jews who were now locked up in camp with these same Nazis and, to the great satisfaction of the Nazis, subject to the same rules. In the barracks where they were at first living together there were constant fights. The Kolyma prisoners, made savage by years in prison, applied against the Nazis the methods they had acquired from their contact with Russian criminals. At last the camp administration was forced to place them in a separate barrack of their own. They also refused to work along with the Nazis, or to work under a German group leader, and they won out on this demand as well.

Three months later they were taken to Odessa and from there sent home by way of Focsan. By the spring of 1947 they were back-home.

BREST-LITOVSK

As for me, I stayed in the camp until fall, and spent three weeks being shipped in a cattle car. But my dreams of early freedom ended in a transfer camp in Brest-Litovsk. There I spent another half year while my papers were once more being checked over. Order in the camp was loose, for this was not a labor camp. The population was constantly changing, and this circumstance was used by the Germans working in the kitchen to put across all sorts of deals with the food, which was terrible.

The attitude of the Poles was essentially different from that of the Germans. They had more dignity, but also became accustomed better to conditions; it was easier for them because their language was so close to the Russian. Their hate for the Germans exploded at the slightest incident; toward the Russians they showed a proud scorn.

THE END

At last came the day when I rolled across the Russo-Polish frontier in a cattle car. Five days later we were unloaded in Frankfurt. I passed through the

Gates of three different transfer camps in the Russian zone of Germany. And then, one brilliant June day in 1948, a flight in an American plane finally ended my eleven years in Soviet prisons and camps.

GLOSSARY

A

Abortion. To prevent the birth of a child after it has been conceived.

Alcohol. Liquid used to destroy disease elements in wounds; also the active element of liquor.

Ambassador. Highest representative of one government in the country of another government.

Antichrist. A power opposing Christ in the world.

Antifascist. Against fascist ideas. The fascist movement and party of Mussolini in Italy was an enemy of Communism. An antifascist button was in this sense friendly to Communism.

Anus. Medical term for the opening at the lower end of the food canal of the human body.

B

Barbed. *Barbed wire.* Iron wire with sharp points at

regular spaces used as a fence to keep prisoners, people, or animals from crossing.

Barracks. A large plain building to house a large number of people, prisoners, or soldiers.

Bolshevik. A member of the Communist Party.

C

Cabbage. A leaf vegetable with a round head used as food.

Centigrade. A temperature scale consisting of 100 equal degrees between the freezing point of water ($^{\circ}$) and the boiling point of water at sea level (100).

Commissar. Head of a government in Russia or in any of the republics of Russia.

Consulate. Office or building where a consul works. A consul is the legal representative of a foreign

government on matters of commerce, travel, and so on.

Counter-revolutionary. One who opposed the Russian revolution; one who opposes the Communist Government of Russia.

Cubic. Having the same measure in length, width, and height, like a box with equal sides.

D

Dysentery. Medical term for disease of the lower food canal with frequent and painful discharge.

E

Ether. Liquid derived from alcohol and acid and used to stop pain in medical treatment and medical operations.

F

Ferment. Living substance used in the preparation of bread to make the mixture of flour and water rise.

H

Herring. An important food

fish found in very large numbers in north waters.

Hoe. Agricultural instrument which consists of a thin, flat metal blade attached at right angles to a long handle and used to break the surface of the ground.

M

Marshal. A military officer of the highest rank in Russia and in other countries.

Meter. Unit of length equal to 39.37 inches.

N

Nitrates. A chemical used to improve the soil for agriculture.

NKVD. Russian secret police.

Nun. Member of a religious order of women who devote their lives to prayer and the service of God. Nuns make vows to obey, to be poor, and not to marry.

R

Raven. Large black bird with a loud voice, con-

sidered in some countries as a sign of bad luck.

Ruble. The money unit of Russia.

S

Sabotage. Damage to machinery, buildings and so on, or interfering with work, production or plans.

Saboteur. One who commits sabotage.

Shovel. Metal blade with wood handle used to move earth, snow, coal, and so on.

Spit(ting). To throw out from the mouth with force some of the liquid that forms in it.

Sweat. Liquid from the skin in the form of drops, especially from the face of a person at work.

T

Toilet. A water closet; an instrument in the form of a seat with running water to carry off human discharges.

Traitor. One who betrays a cause. In the language of a Communist, one who betrays the Communist cause.

U

Uranium. A very valuable, heavy white metal. One type of uranium (U-235) can be exploded for war purposes. It produces a great amount of energy for use in peace.

V

Vitamin(s). Any of a group of food elements essential in small quantities to maintain life but not supplying energy themselves.

